ART SKILLS
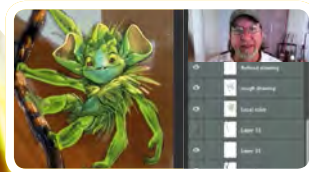# START SKETCHING

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Welcome...
to a beastly edition!

Greetings! Well, what can I tell you? I've had such a wonderful time working on this issue. Now, don't get me wrong, every issue of ImagineFX is a joy to work on. It's just that this one was just a little bit more special. I got to see close hand the never-ending, upbeat creativity from cover artist Aaron Blaise. The guy is an art machine! No wonder that he's the visionary artist behind some of Disney's most popular and enduring animated creatures. Aaron was a joy to work with on the cover – he was full of ideas and constant creativity! (Hmm, I wonder if he'd like to do next month's cover as well?!) I fully recommend that you take the time to read his workshop and watch his video, too.

Do you know what else brought me joy this month? Our long-standing Artist Q&A feature. I loved the variety of imagery and art styles from the likes of Ross Tran and others. I also loved working with 3D visionary Pascal Blanché. I'm a great fan of his work, so was very excited to see how he builds his imagery. And, if you need even more critter art, there's an extraordinary menagerie of creatures over on page 42. Some of my favourite artists are nestled within those very pages.

Also – and at a clear risk of sounding like your parents – have you thought about Christmas yet? We've got a bundle of stuff that would make great presents: from magazine binders (page 75), curated special editions (pages 23 and 90) and a brilliant new print and digital subscription bundle (page 32). Enjoy!

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX
Contents

42

All **creatures great** and **small**

"I tried to design a never-before-seen creature and its environment. I had lots of fun"
Ken Barthelmey

Reader **FXPosé**
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

35

Q&A: mixing styles

52

Sketchbook: Wes Burt

36

Q&A: trad look

38

Q&A: a lantern

20

A new breed of art fest

26

Artist in residence

39

Q&A: a glass face

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX
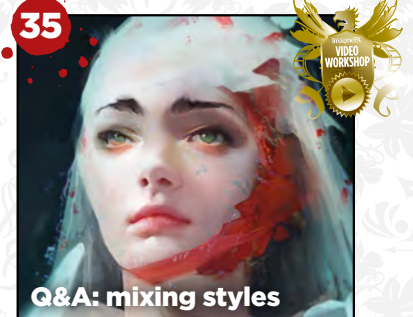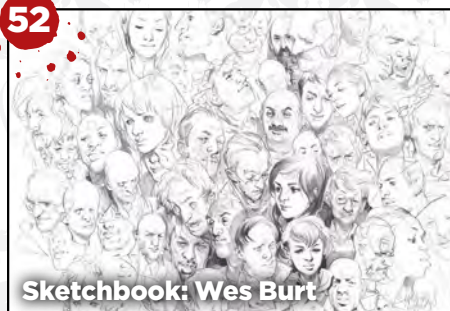
Workshops

Advice and techniques from pro artists…

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES Turn over the page for this issue's art assets

From thumbnail to finish

Paint dynamic creatures

FANTASY
illustrator

Inspiration and advice from the best traditional artists

We visit Singapore

Face painting

Construct a maquette

Petar Meseldžija on art

NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX**

Resources

Getting your hands on all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **http://ifxm.ag/claw116paw**

OVER 4 HOURS of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

COVER ART VIDEO

Improve your creature art

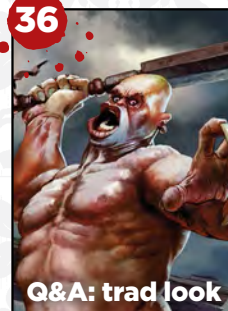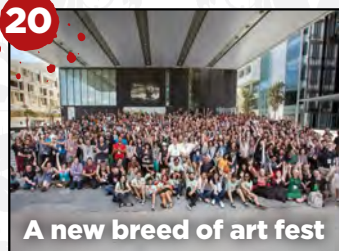Aaron Blaise paints dynamic-looking creatures digitally by applying traditional thinking

GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files…

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar):
http://ifxm.ag/claw116paw

2 Find the files you want
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.

3 Download what you need
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX**

abc Print 13,137 Digital 2,708

The ABC combined print, digital and digital publication circulation for Jan-Dec 2013 is
15,845
A member of the Audited Bureau of Circulations

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WORKSHOP VIDEOS
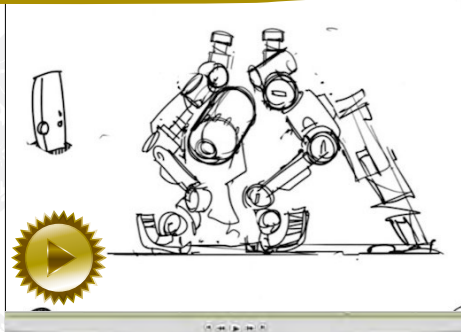
Matt Tkocz
Learn to adopt a thumbnailing process that helps generate reams of concepts.
Plus WIPs, final image and brushes
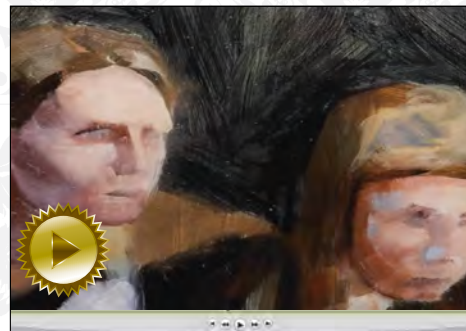
Edward Howard
The traditional artist shows you why precision is so important when painting the human face, and how that helps communication between your art and the viewer.
Plus WIPs and final image
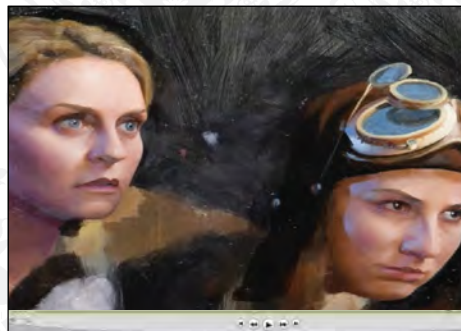
TRAINING

In-Ah Roediger
The animator and concept artist helps you get under the skin of your characters in her Maya masterclass.

Q&A VIDEOS
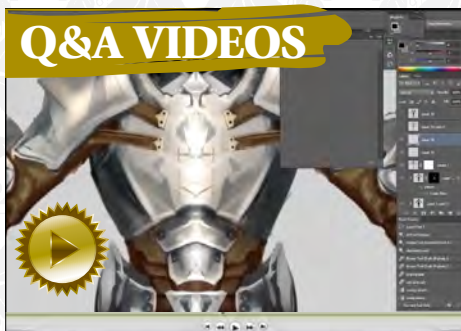
Damian Schouweiler
Work fast and loose to design believable leather and metal fantasy armour.
Plus WIPs and final image
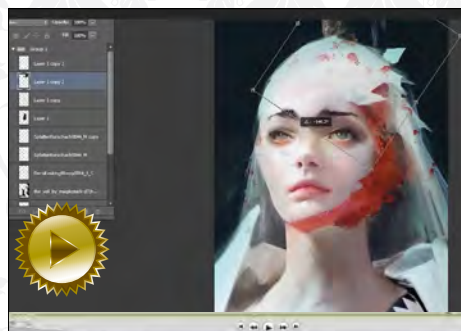
Ross Tran
Mix photo realism with a loose painting style to bring new flavours to a portrait.
Plus WIPs and final image
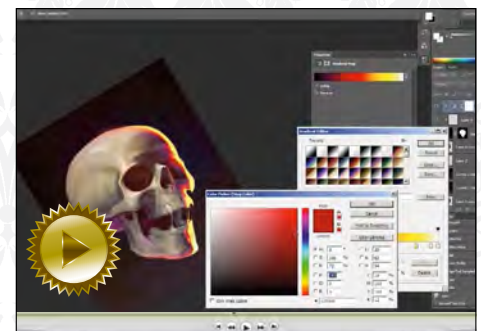
Damian Schouweiler
Choose accuracy over fantastical elements to create a convincing scary skull.
Plus WIPs and final image

PLUS WIPs and finished art available to download, created by accomplished professional artists from around the world, including Aaron Blaise, Olly Lawson, Zezhou Chen, Pascal Blanché, John Petersen, Corrado Vanelli, Dave Brasgalla and Naiha Raza.

4 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING…

PHOTOSHOP SKETCHING
Matt Tkocz uses this custom brush to sketch thumbnails fast.

CREATURE CREATION
Aaron Blaise uses this brush for both drawing and painting creatures.

TRADITIONAL APPEARANCE
Zezhou Chen likes this for helping the impression of a traditional look.

1

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ImagineFX
ARTIST
of the
MONTH

🇺🇸 **Wala Alhadad**
LOCATION: US
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MEDIA: Photoshop, Painter

Wala's work begins with thumbnails to visualise his ideas, before putting into practise his understanding of lighting, colour and composition developed during his time at Academy of Art University. He graduated with an MFA in visual development, and now has five years experience in gaming and animation.

"Although fantasy art is the dominant look and feel of my work," Wala says, "I was always interested in exploring the immense universe of reality and fictional worlds in concept art. The vibrant colours of Orientalist arts influence me, as do all aspects of live drawing and plein air painting."

Artist crit
Wala's art impresses illustrator Nick Harris

"I enjoyed looking at Morgan and Maddox. The image is full of ideas that pique the viewer's interest, all delivered by someone who really knows how to paint. What's not to like?"

1 WAVES OF CONFLICT "I wanted to show a conflict between the main guy and the other, smaller ones. I imported the ship as a 3D model then painted over it with Photoshop and Painter."

2 MORGAN AND MADDOX "Production art of a cinematic moment from a 3D animated film project. The story is about two kids who chase a villain and try to enter his castle."

ARTIST OF THE MONTH
Congratulations Wala – you've won yourself a copy of Exposé 11 and d'artiste: Character Design! To find out more about these two great books, go to **www.ballisticpublishing.com.**

Jakub Rozalski

LOCATION: Germany
WEB: http://ifxm.ag/jrozalski
EMAIL: mr.werewolf.art@gmail.com
MEDIA: Photoshop, Painter, SketchUp

Jakub is a Polish concept artist and illustrator who lives and works in Hamburg, Germany. He has over a decade of experience in the entertainment industry. His work combines classic and contemporary techniques, mirroring his love of mixing factual and fictional elements – best seen in his nightmarish visions of rural life ruled by robots.

"I try to combine classical painting styles and motifs," Jakub says, "with modern design and interesting concepts. For me, the most important thing is to create a unique atmosphere and tell a story, showing everyday situations in unusual environments."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"The juxtaposition of 1920 civilian and military life with giant mechs armed to the teeth is a clever idea in itself, but what elevates it is Jakub's choice of painting style, which gives the concept an added degree of authenticity."
Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

1 1920 – WARLORD "One of the illustrations from my personal 1920+ project, in which I wanted to mix a giant mech with cavalry and a rural Polish village of the early 20th century. If this project helps interest someone in the history of my country, it would be great."

2 BROTHERS IN ARMS – WARLORD "This is a painting for a story about two brothers in arms, a Viking and a Samurai in some dark, medieval fantasy world. With this piece I wanted to build a rather disturbing mood, but also a belief that the two main characters can more than handle the imminent dangers – that, for them, this is a piece of cake."

3 1920 – HARVEST "Another image from the 1920+ series. I wanted to show the daily life and work in the countryside, in the style of classical painting but with the modernism of the big robot. This quiet rural atmosphere is very dear to me... but so is portraying big battle robots!"

Jan Vavruša

LOCATION: Czech Republic
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EMAIL: jan@vavrusa.com
MEDIA: Photoshop, NUKE, Maya, Vue, After Effects

Jan took to computer graphics at young age, and hasn't looked back. The Brno-based creative, who works as a graphic designer, recently began experimenting with matte painting and CG environments – which haven't taken him long to master.

Working primarily in Photoshop – with the "real magic" coming through 3D compositing – the Czech strives to show in his work something the viewer would otherwise never see. "I love landscape photography and watching films," he says, "so I think my passion for matte painting comes from that. It enables me to create my own stories."

1 THE FROZEN THRONE "This is one of my favourite environments from the Blizzard cinematics. It's a 2D matte painting using a lot of photos from many different places, including my window."

2 THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY "After I finished watching this film, I felt like I needed to do some fan art. It's a set extension of K2, the second highest mountain in the world."

3 FAREWELL TO THE SUN "Sometimes I play at being Mother Nature and change whatever I want in the original image – even the position of the sun. This shot involved a lot of photo manipulation, colour corrections, painting of light and shadows, turning an ordinary image into something magical."
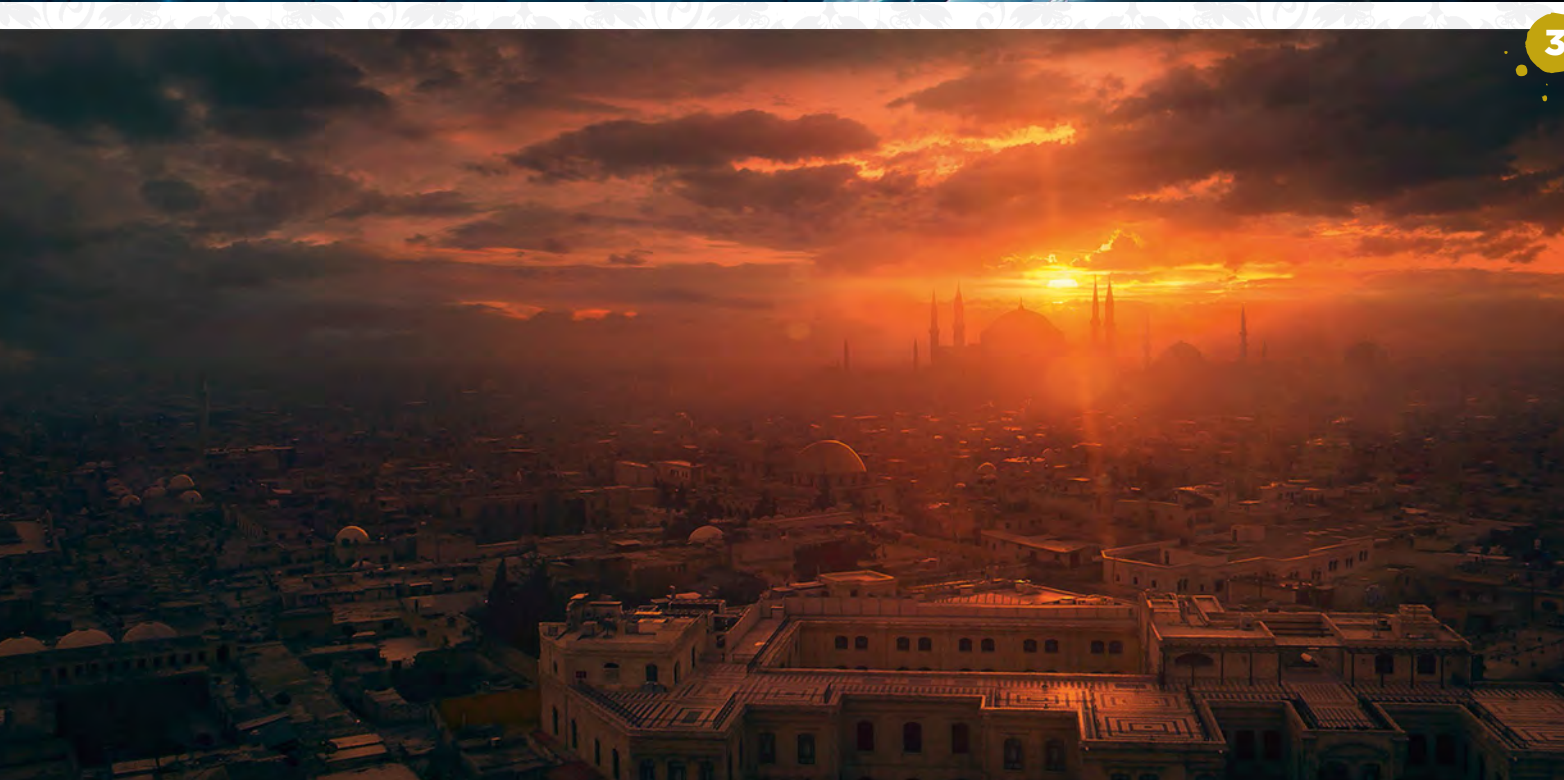
3

Ivan Khomenko

LOCATION: Russia
WEB: www.ivankhomenko.tumblr.com
EMAIL: ivan_khomenko@yahoo.com
MEDIA: Photoshop, ZBrush, Modo,
Marvelous Designer, KeyShot, DAZ

Ivan studied jewellery design for five years, only to find his true passion was concept design. A year ago he got his break contributing art to video game Outrise. Shaddy Safadi, founder of One Pixel Brush, spotted the Russian 's work and invited him to join his concept art studio. "You grow really quickly," the Kostroma-based creative says, "in such a talented team and with such a great art direction – that's for sure. In the meantime I'm trying to learn 3D and working on my little personal project... about barbarians on Mars."

1 GIRL WITH A GUN "This started as an experiment with different colours and techniques. I was trying to move away from the photorealistic stuff and do a more painterly looking piece... and paint a girl with a sci-fi gun. Yep, like everyone else does!"

2 THE ACID PLANET "Here I tried to combine 2D and 3D. I started with the ship model in Modo, made a simple render and then finished it in Photoshop. These days, every concept artist should know some 3D. So from time to time I run through similar practice pieces to enhance my workflow and become more efficient."

🇺🇸 **Jonathon Reed**
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.aenimarium.com
EMAIL: aenimarium@gmail.com
MEDIA: Photoshop

Jonathon, in his own words, grew up in a tiny town in the corner of a boring midwestern state. He left Kansas and joined the army. Four years and two deployments later – and via a job as a mixed martial arts conditioning coach – he began his career as an illustrator.

"I place a heavy emphasis on achieving realism in my paintings," the Wichita-based artist says, "while maintaining good levels of energy and fantasy to captivate the viewer. To achieve this, I focus on gathering very good references and maintaining a strong visual library."

1 DREAMSCAPE "This painting started as a reference to Icarus, but eventually became an allusion to the dreams people have of falling."

2 BENEVOLENT RESCUER "This was my first attempt at narrative illustration. I wanted to show an event that gave the viewer some room to interpret what was happening. The rescuer is a young paladin who's assisting a local shepherd, when he discovers that his kingdom is facing imminent danger."

3 ARID SENTINEL "This painting originated as a rock study and slowly developed into what it is now. I chose to depict a huge golem who was awakened by the stirrings of ancient magic."

🇨🇦 Steve McDonald

LOCATION: Canada
WEB: http://ifxm.ag/smcdonald
EMAIL: mcdonaldpye@gmail.com
MEDIA: Photoshop, SketchBook Pro

Steve describes himself as a hybrid artist: "I trained as an illustrator in the 1980s," the Toronto-based artists says, "and spent the next decade and a half working in traditional media – making my living off of gallery walls. In recent years I've gotten back into illustration and embraced new digital tools to develop a style that's a mixture of both media."

His work usually begins as simple pencil drawings or abstract acrylic washes, before moving in Photoshop or SketchBook Pro. "I'll paint or draw the background by hand and then insert the foreground and/or middle ground using digital processes." His aim is create art that doesn't look very obviously digital. "If the viewer has to ask how I did it," he says, "then I consider that a good thing."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"I love the look of Steve's illustrations – they're full of lovingly crafted details. The quirky flying vehicles are a fun addition to the mix. Who'd wouldn't want to catch that bus on the morning commute?"
Claire Howlett,
Editor

1 NEXT STOP NUNAVAT "The background is a reproduction of a large charcoal drawing with acrylic washes of Toronto. I drew the bus with Photoshop and inserted it afterwards. Nunavat is Canada's most Northern Territory in the Arctic."

2 WHISKEY RUN The background drawing is of Lunnenberg, Nova Scotia. The Colonial harbour town would have seen its share of boats full of whiskey from London, so I replaced that with an English double-decker bus."

3 THRUST "A cross section of a NASA rocket with the casing removed."

4 SATURN "Another cross-section of a rocket engine from the early days of NASA."

5 ICE CREAM TRUCK "The background is a hand-ink line drawing of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. I drew the bus in Photoshop. The old fashioned ice cream truck – equipped with Star Wars-style thrusters – is meant to evoke that small-town nostalgia we equate with the truck's chimes."
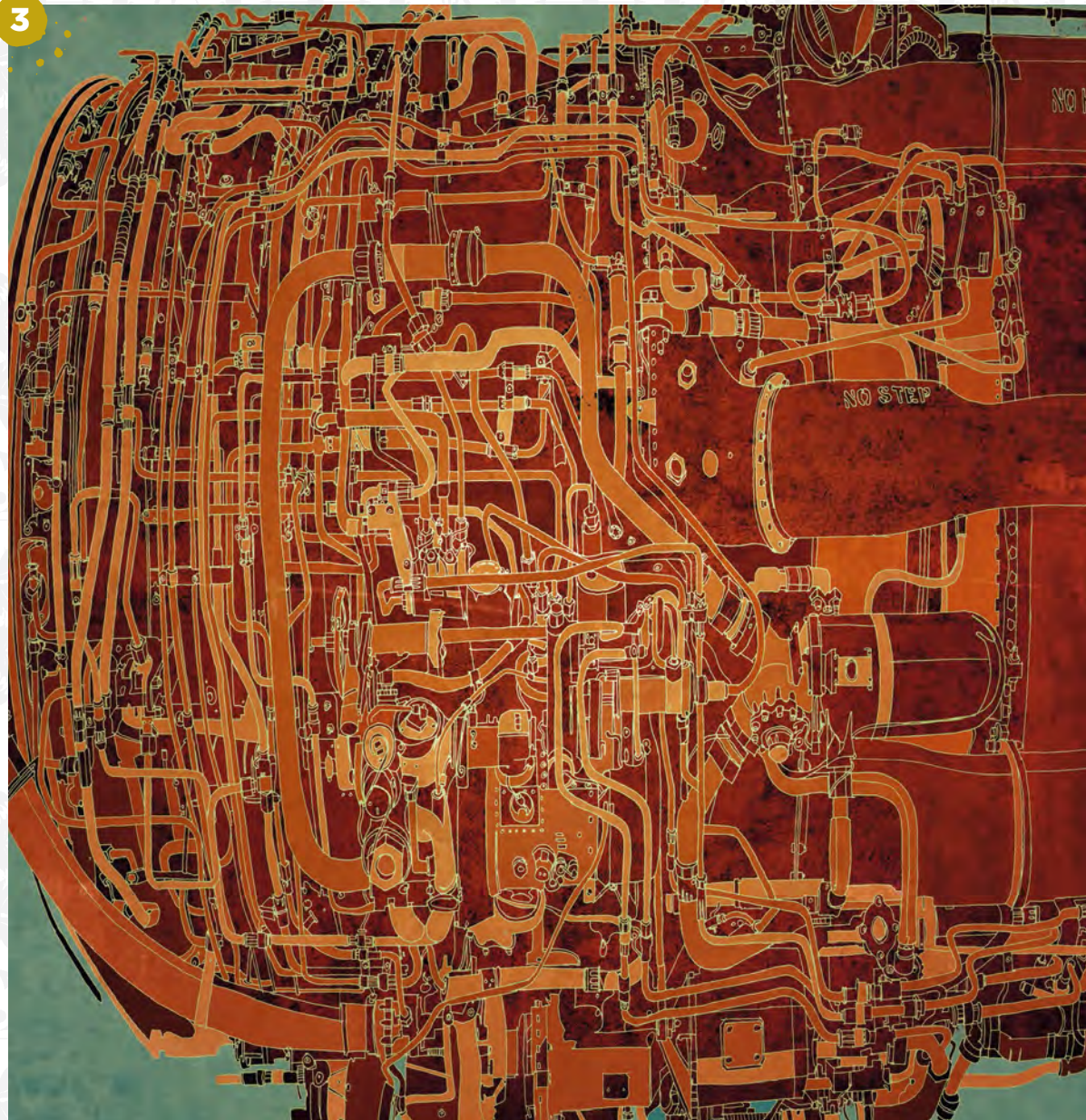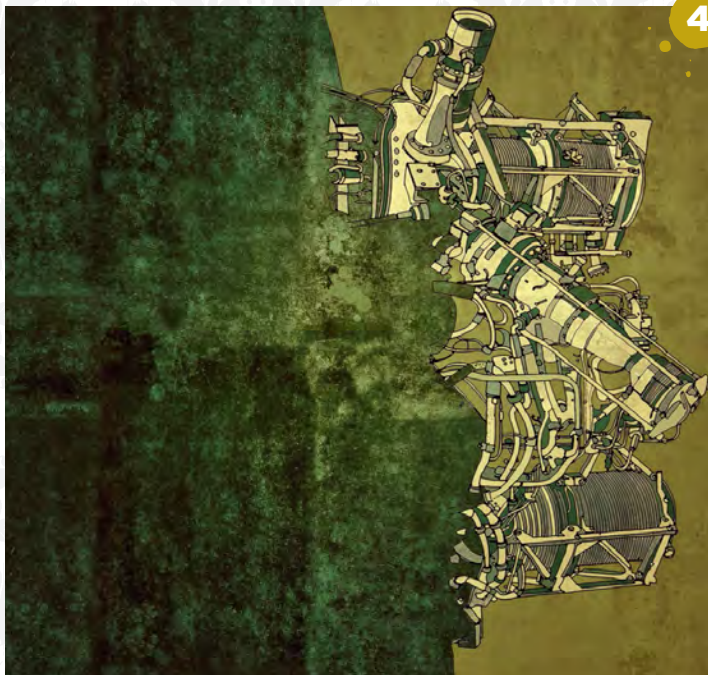
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66 Packed full of insightful articles, with input from some of the world's leading animators, artists and filmmakers 99

We'll take you behind the scenes of the biggest blockbusters and show you how top VFX studios created some of cinema's biggest scenes.

You'll also meet small studios and freelancers focused on storytelling, and discover how the latest technologies are enabling them to compete in a high-pressure global marketplace.

The digital book is divided into three sections: film, broadcast and commercials. And here's a sneak peek at what's in store...

PART ONE: FILM

Visual effects have never been so important to the continued success and popularity of movies. Here are some of the highlights of this section:

▶ We speak to Framestore, Double Negative and Whiskytree about their work on big-budget VFX blockbusters, including Gravity and Elysium.

▶ Pixar's Presto software looks to change the way animators work. Read all about it here.

▶ Gravity was one of the most ambitious visual effects movies ever made. Its makers, Framestore, talk us through its journey into space.

▶ How much does the use of colour affect the look and feel of a film? We talk to the artists behind Life of Pi, Oblivion and Pacific Rim to find out more.

PART 2: BROADCAST

Right now, TV is the new film, and so the second part of this exclusive free book looks at some of the issues surrounding computer graphics in broadcast right now. Highlights include:

▶ How Vizrt brings real-time graphics to sports fans' screens worldwide.

▶ How Elemental Technologies' advanced video processing platform helped the BBC to bring the 2012 Olympics to a range of viewing devices.

▶ The impact Europe's move to 50in-plus TV sets is having on the industry.

▶ VFX house Milk reveals the technology behind the special effects on 21st century Doctor Who.

PART 3: COMMERCIALS

For 3D artists, ads compound the problems of creating high-end effects with tight production schedules. In this section focusing on commercials, we explore the art of making magic on a deadline. Highlights include:

▶ Top studio The Mill discuss how new real-time rendering workflows are changing the way that VFX is created for commercials.

▶ Swiss post house CC Media explains how it built a 4K colour grading system at boutique prices.

▶ We examine the explosive growth of destruction visual effects for ads.

▶ Betfair's This Is Play spot features a rather unusual table tennis player. We explore how Gramercy Park Studios brought the beast to life.

▶ Nexus Productions has twice won the Cannes Grand Prix and picked up two D&AD Black Pencils. We explore the pipeline that powers the company's award-winning ads.

TV GRAPHICS

Explore the state of the art in broadcast graphics, from virtual sets to real-time infographics.

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The THU tribe grew from 150 last year to around 500 in 2014.

A new breed of art event

Free rein A unique setup and a loyal, tribal following has made the indie upstart Trojan Horse was a Unicorn the best art event around

It's a small miracle that Trojan Horse was a Unicorn (THU) returned for a second time this September. It may have established a passionate following, but last year's debut left its directors half a million euros in the red. THU 2014 shouldn't have happened at all, but it did for all the right reasons.

Held near Setúbal, Portugal, the most talented creatives in the VFX, animation, game and design industries came to speak and inspire 500 ticket-buyers, all hell-bent on cracking the industry themselves. Friendships were forged, projects planned, all with no barriers between the festival goers and guests.

People were actively encouraged to speak to their art heroes – whether that was concept artist Jana Schirmer, Rockstar North's Ian McQue, pin-up boss Serge Birault or Avatar lead artist (and Oscar winning) Andrew R Jones. The addition of mentorships saw ticket holders gather around these artists during the day, soaking in their hard-won art advice. Elsewhere, life-drawing and sculpture classes ran either side of the daily free beer happy hour – a time to let it all sink in.

This year's THU happened because of sheer obstinate passion. "Last year the potential sponsors didn't get what we wanted to do," says THU co-director André Luís. "They didn't believe in what we were doing. They wanted money in advance, but to begin with I had zero euros in my pockets. But I thought, 'Let's do it anyway.'"

Taking a moment's rest in the restaurant of the five-star Tróia Design Hotel where THU is held, André is a changed man from last year: battle-worn for sure, but also verging on relaxed; confident in the friendly monster he's created. Across the restaurant, Industrial Light & Magic art director Christian Alzmann shares a joke and a glass of wine with one-time head of the company Scott

Alex Oliver takes a sculpture class and Christian Alzmann chats with Jeremy Mann, and the wine flows before another evening 'fireside' chat.

Scott and Syd Mead chat with the crowd for an hour, after the Blade Runner artist had finished his hour-long presentation.

Below, ILM artist Karla Ortiz swaps her stylus for a brush in a life-drawing session.

Previous head of Digital Domain and ILM, Scott Ross, has proudly spread the THU message since last year.

> 66 I've been to so many of the other fests, but Trojan Horse felt like it was all about the artists. So that moved me 99

Ross. A few tables over, French artists Loïc Zimmermann and Geoffrey Ernault take it in turns being outrageous to a crowd of friends they've mainly known online until now. If André is "less of a zombie" this year, it's because he knows he's got the backing of the best artistic talents in the world.

THE NEED FOR SPONSORSHIP

Still, the financial woes of running a start-up event linger. "This year I was hoping that the sponsors would help at least with the water, or the coffee, or the ferry to Tróia, but they didn't. I'm bringing people from around the world to their city, to Lisbon, but they didn't help. They said I didn't know how to publicise the event," he says, with a gleam in his eyes, "so I've brought an Oscar winner and Syd Mead here, and managed to represent 45 countries in the audience."

His aim is that sponsors will take the slack of the expenses from eight per cent this year to 50 per cent in 2015. Having confirmed

Co-director Inês Silva introduces a talk by Pixomondo, one of the great studios present at Trojan Horse this year.

that talks are underway with new sponsors The Foundry, Chaos Group, Next Limit and Wacom, he might just do it.

"You can't help but fall in love with André, right?" says Scott Ross, co-founder of Digital Domain, ex-head of ILM and self-confessed big mouth. Scott's the reason Andrew R Jones is here. None of the artists at THU were paid a fee. Instead, all profit (when it's eventually made) will be put back into the event or go to an industry-related charity. This is a festival running on the fumes of passion, and it doesn't hurt to have a mouthy guy with decades of contacts fighting your corner. "I've been to FMX, Siggraph and so many of the other fests," says Scott, "where people are selling hardware and software and there are vendors. Trojan Horse felt like it was all about the artists. So that moved me."

Scott became inspired by events across the Spanish border. Software designer ➤

The difference between working on cars and movies
The auto industry was easier. In the movies, you've got to make everyone in the audience know the purpose of the prop you've designed in one instance, or you disrupt the flow of the film.

On being a visual futurist
The tools will change, but what's most valuable is the idea. Science fiction is reality ahead of schedule. If it's a really good idea, then eventually it'll come true.

On his current US art exhibition
We'd like for it to come to Europe, starting with London. You'll probably never see 50 pieces of highly detailed gouache in one place ever again! The technique is just not used. It's laborious to learn.

Recent film work
I worked with Neill Blomkamp on Elysium, on concepts for the Torus spaceship. I'd done this before, years ago for National Geographic. An article on living in space. And that inspired Neill to speak to me.

On inventing the smart car
I remember doing tiny car designs for decades, for Playboy and Philips. I'd never get in one on a freeway. I like a car with a meter and a half in front of me at least.

His contemporaries
Ralph McQuarrie had an amazing ability to show scale. He was a delightful man, very softly spoken. He's gone, and the tragic aspect was that he had Parkinson's towards the end of his life and he couldn't draw. But for years he would do a large watercolour or gouaches every year and cut them into pieces and you'd get a piece of this overall painting. It was wonderful!

Syd has created concepts for a host of sci-fi films, including TRON and Aliens. His latest film project is Tomorrowland.
www.sydmead.com

Andrew R Jones explains to the crowd what it takes to win an Oscar.

Geofrey Ernault takes his mentorship session seriously, in one of several groups led by pro artists.

Rockstar Games art star and all-round lovely chap Ian McQue overcomes stage fright to blow the audience away.

Suicide Girls modelled for sketch groups throughout the week.

and artist Peter Plantec had become associated with the Mundos Digitales festival held in A Coruña, Spain. "I was invited over there two years ago, and saw what Peter was doing for that festival, acting as a mentor, bringing people in from the larger scope of work – big visual-effects films," Scott says. "I thought I'd approach André and say, 'I think I can help you, get you in touch with certain people from my history and my background and help the festival.' For the past year, we've done that."

LIKE A FAMILY GET-TOGETHER

This ethos runs through the ranks. Last year artist and photographer Loïc Zimmermann visited his friend Michael Kutsche in Berlin with a big smile on his face. "He was raving about the event," says Michael, sat in the foyer of the Tróia Design Hotel, after taking a moment to process that his hero Syd Mead is across the room enjoying an afternoon drink. "This is a very special thing, more like a family get-together. But when these artists are

❝ I just confirmed Pixar as a recruitment presence next year. Pixar doesn't recruit anywhere in the world ❞

talking on stage, they reveal so much: how they got there, their failures, and how they burned out sometimes, then got back on their feet. You have this emotional relationship with them – so much better than just showing the good parts." The German concept artist is now booked to work on THU 2015 promotional artwork, at no charge.

André and co-director Inês Silva could expand the capacity well into 1,000, getting much-needed revenue from tickets, but they

refuse, determined not to lose the unique dynamic they've created. Yet there's a clear business plan behind the philanthropy of building a new tribe of artists. "Next year to cover expenses, we want to do live streaming of the talks, the tutorials, that we can then sell to the people who can't make it physically here," says André. With 800 emails of interest already received for the 500 golden tickets that went on sale 1 November, 2015 might be the year that THU's bank account doesn't see red.

They've got another ace up their sleeve. "Recruitment is important. I need to bring the recruitment companies in and offer them great talent… and I just confirmed Pixar as a recruitment presence next year. Pixar doesn't recruit anywhere in the world."

What of the 2015 line-up, then? Throwing a few names at him, such as Craig Mullins, Lorland Chen, JS Rossbach, Stephan Martiniere, Pascal Blanché, Raymond Swanland, Terryl Whitlatch, James Jean and Hajime Sorayama, André says there are one or two of these artists confirmed. Ian McQue has already said he'll be back to mentor and teach.

With that momentum there's time to perfect the THU experience. "We're not expanding so we can concentrate on what we do best," says Inês, "organising the group mentor sessions, art battles, recruitment sessions, better Wi-Fi everywhere, an up-to-the-minute app with the schedule times, live streaming… They'll be improvements. We'll make THU better next year."

As difficult as it is to imagine, our money is on them doing exactly that. ●

In an event that encourages honest interaction, the Q&A sessions are filled with passionate discussion.

Karla Ortiz gives her talk Do it all: Concept Art, Illustration and Fine Art to a packed audience.

Concept art for the Knowhere mining colony was taken care of by Atomhawk's Pete Thompson.

Pete Thompson, one of the founding members of Atomhawk, painted this concept of Kyln, an intergalactic prison.

Out of this world concept art

Marvel-ous machinery Atomhawk has released the first concept images from Marvel's smash-hit Guardians of the Galaxy

The film of the summer had to start somewhere; that somewhere was Atomhawk, which produced gorgeous concept art for the varied ships and environments of Guardians of the Galaxy.

Charting the adventures of a rag-tag of unlikely heroes, including a talking racoon and a monotonous tree-giant, Guardians of the Galaxy grossed $612m world-wide and continues to be a surprise success. Full of puns, pranks and one-liners, the cast and crew ensured its smash-hit status, but there was plenty of artistic flair on show, too.

Responsible for the concept art work for Marvel's 2013 hit Thor: The Dark World, Atomhawk were then invited to create a broad range of imagery for the film.

The team spent over a year working on the spacecraft concepts, and were responsible for the early etchings of the Milano, Yondu's fighter craft and the Nero fighter craft. "Guardians has been an awesome and truly inspiring project to work on," explains Atomhawk director Ron Ashtiani. "As our second

Tim Hill put together this beautiful execution for Nero's fighter craft.

Marvel project, Guardians presented a fresh set of challenges. This time we were tasked with reimagining a Marvel comic from scratch, rather than working with an existing film franchise. The team relished in the creative license this gave us and I think this feeling is evident in the work we produced."

Taking inspiration from the script, Atomhawk produced high volumes of sketched-out images until something hit the mark. Things started to slow down as they worked on refining the details until everyone was happy with the final result. Ron reveals that, "Our preferred way of working is to get involved in the creative process as soon as possible, to feed our inspiration and help to define the creative vision of a project, before we execute on the art work."

To see more Guardians of the Galaxy concept art work from Atomhawk visit **www.atomhawk.com**.

> ❝ **The team relished in the creative license this gave us, and this feeling is evident in the work we produced** ❞

The concept art for Star-Lord's spaceship, the Milano, was created by Roberto F Castro.

All images © Marvel 2014

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

I've taped an electrical pencil sharpener to my tilted desk. I only use wooden pencils, because I prefer the dynamic line that they produce.

I keep different models for reference on the window shelf, along with a lovely T-Rex model made by Paul Bonner.

The other artists at the studio are a constant influence. I can ask for advice – or they will give unsolicited critiques when passing by my table! Taking a walk around their tables sparks ideas too.

Jesper Ejsing

Ideas factory The Danish artist shows us around his Copenhagen studio and explains why media is secondary to the idea

I've been a part of the Pinligt Selskab (Awkward Company) for 20 years. It's a creative space consisting of children's book illustrators and comic book artists, and is very important to me. Indeed, I consider my studio as my second home.

It takes about half an hour to ride my bike from where I live to central Copenhagen. When I arrive and go to my painting tables I'm instantly in work mode. This is down to the place itself, the environment that

includes my fellow artists, and the simple fact that my workspace isn't at home. This place is designed purely for creative thinking and doing, nothing else.

Sometimes it's a tidy space, sometimes it looks like the home of a hoarder or a crazy person. When I paint or draw I'm focused and don't care much for anything else. I have a table for drawing and painting, and another for digital work. These days I don't prefer any specific media over another. They are, after all, just a way of getting the ideas out.

A couple of years ago I built a tilt table that helped me sit up straighter while painting. My palette is called Sta-Wet Masterson. There's a sponge underneath the palette paper that keeps the acrylic paint wet for days at a time. I use the big one for all the colours I'm using, and for mixing. When I start on the details, I place paint into the little tray and start working directly in front of the painting. I got neck strain from constantly tilting to the right to pick up paint or mix, but now the little palette enables me to maintain a better position while working.

My digital kit comprises a fairly new Cintiq and a PC, which I would exchange for a Mac in an instant! This setup is ideal for producing concept art.

Both my art tables can be raised or lowered. I often stand up during the first stage of a painting when wide, aggressive strokes are required.

My digital table is also where I leave all my reference books and objects. I can do this because the Cintiq is my work area, leaving me plenty of extra space for mess!

I keep things that inspire me on my notice board, below. Up on this shelf I put art I've recently finished or that I think has succeeded in some way. I keep them visible as pointers for where I should be going, or to push myself to do better.

I try to place the paints that are roughly the same next to each other so that when the paint starts running or I mix them, there are no incongruous combinations.

I use an airbrush loaded with water to mist the surface I'm working on. I also spray the acrylic with a fine spray, which keeps it from drying out too quickly. This approach means I can create large and yet very controlled blends, and enables me to apply wet glazes evenly into the paint underneath. I learnt this technique from an old animator, back in the day when they painted backgrounds in acrylic. Secrets of the trade! *Jesper is a full-time freelancer, and has also found the time to write several fiction books. See his art at www.jesperejsing.dk.*

Hatboy
by Vaughn Pinpin

An early mood concept of Alien: Isolation, intended to recreate the atmosphere of Ridley Scott's original film.

Alone in the dark

Isolated incident The Alien: Isolation team shares concept art from the new survival-horror game

A number of new space craft were created for Alien: Isolation, including this early concept of one of the game's ships.

Alien: Isolation is a survival-horror video game set some 15 years after the events of Alien. Its gameplay is designed to mirror Ridley Scott's taut original movie, with the team behind the concept art saying it tried to recreate the look and feel of Chris Foss and Ron Cobb's original artwork.

"We were obviously heavily inspired by the look and feel of the original Alien ship," Sega creative lead Alistair Hope says. "These original designs were detailed, really credible and beautiful."

The accompanying art book, the Art of Alien: Isolation, shows over 300 images taken from the game. Sega art lead Jude Bond explains more: "We wanted to create a new Alien experience," he says, "one that was intimate and claustrophobic. One that, for the first time, lets you experience what it would be like to encounter and survive against Ridley Scott's original Alien.

"In the view from beneath Sevastopol, for example – Alien: Isolation's space station

– we wanted to give a really strong sense of scale, but also a sense of fragility. Despite its size, the world around you feels as though it could fall apart at any moment."

Alien: Isolation and the Art of Alien: Isolation are both out now. Find out more about the book at **http://ifxm.ag/aisolation**.

ImagineNation

Letters
YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on **claire@imaginefx.com** or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury Bath BA1 1UA, England

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Anatomy guide

I love this magazine! My first issue was the Dave Gibbons Watchmen one and I have been hooked on it ever since. I especially enjoy your special editions on comics and manga. Are there any more planned soon? Also, I missed out on getting your big anatomy edition that came out a while back. Do you know where I can still get hold of a copy, please?
Melissa B, via email

Melissa writes in to ask about availability of our Anatomy Essentials special – which has just been reprinted.

Claire replies Hello Melissa. That Watchmen special was issue 42, so you really have stuck with us for a while. Thanks! The anatomy edition you're talking about is probably Anatomy Essentials, which we recently reprinted. See page 23 for more info on where to get it. And keep an eye on the mag for more specials!

Less Photoshop

I would like to say I love your magazine and have been following it for years. However, I find myself disappointed, because the tutorials are not as diverse as I would like when it comes to the programs. I know the industry standard is usually Photoshop, but there are so many artists that use Corel Painter and Paint Tool SAI instead. For example, the artist Hector Sevilla (elsevilla on deviantART) is a very successful digital artist who exclusively uses Corel Painter. Could we have a magazine that showcases all programs other than Photoshop one day? Thank you for listening.
Rebecca Rinaldi, via email

Claire replies Rebecca, thank you for your insights. I do try to provide a mix of software tools in our workshop section, but it doesn't always happen that way. Also, you're right, Photoshop is the most widely used digital art tool, so it usually takes precedence. Have you enjoyed our Core Skills section? We've recently provided an introduction to Google SketchUp, which has gone down really well.

"I love the personal glimpse at how other people work," says Gary, of our Artist in Residence section.

Digital edition bookmarks

I've been subscribed to the iPad version of your magazine for going on two years now, so I have at least 26 issues, plus the extras I've bought. I find myself dipping in and out of all the magazines quite frequently, but it can be difficult to locate that one article I know exists somewhere. Is there any possibility of adding the ability to bookmark pages? It would be so useful.

Love the mag by the way. I'm only a hobbyist, but get such pleasure from following your tutorials and advice, as well as being inspired by the real artists you cover. You truly can say your efforts inspire – because they do.

And if I can make one plea: never get rid of Artist in Residence. I love the personal glimpse at how other people work.
Gary Baptist, via email

Claire replies Gary, you're a man after my own heart! I also love seeing how artists work and organise their space to fit around their creative times. Unfortunately, while your bookmark request for digital editions is a good one, it isn't one that we can implement. Sorry!

Golden or not?

I read with interest the James Gurney article on the myth of the golden ratio [issue 114, November 2014]. What was most puzzling about his advice on not using the golden ratio as a guide to composition, was that there are plenty of other times in your magazine that other artists have recommended that we do use golden ration as a guide. So, which advice is right?
Michael Pyall, via email

Claire replies Thanks for getting in touch Michael – at least we know that you're reading and taking all of our tips and advice in! I'm not one to tell you which advice to take. That's for you to decide. What I do know from commissioning countless artists to create workshops for ImagineFX is that each person has their own process, their own dos and don'ts, and their own rules to follow and ignore. It takes time for each artist to work out what works best for them. I'm sure that – with your attention to detail! – you'll find what works best for you in good time, too.

DID YOU MISS ISSUE 115?
Visit our shop at **http://ifxm.ag/ifxstore** for details on this edition and other special offers, too.

FRESH PAINT
Your art news that's grabbed our attention

theDrawist (@mackchater)
"Quick colour study/ style test for inked character...#Comics #CreatorOwned"
http://ifxm.ag/freshdraw

Jenny Luco (@JennyLuco)
"And now I added color :) (study from reference photo by Jimmy Nelson) #painting"
http://ifxm.ag/freshjenny
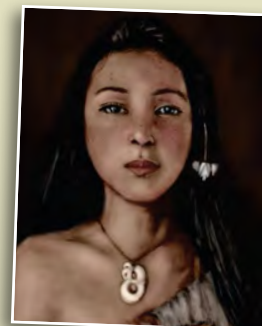
Simon Wright (@SimonWrightArt)
"Ambush speed paint."
http://ifxm.ag/freshsimon

Just finished something you want us to shout about? Send it our way on Twitter (@imaginefx), or find us on Facebook!

net

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.Back issues

Missed an issue of ImagineFX? Don't panic – many of our previous editions are available for you to download today!

Issue 115
December 2014

This month we're giving you the skills you need to help break into the games industry, whether it's painting better character art, refining spaceship concepts, being creative within the art production pipeline or generating environment concepts quickly. We also explore the art of Destiny, and talk to the art leads behind the year's biggest game.

Issue 114
November 2014

Charlie Bowater's gorgeous cover image kicks off an issue that'll boost your digital art skills. Tony Foti explains Photoshop's key tools, James Gurney breaks the rules of composition, Don Seegmiller's texture advice will help to give your art extra depth, and Te Hu's sculpting approach to digital portraits is a must-read!

Issue 113
October 2014

This month we're helping you break into the exciting animation industry. Pramin Phatiphong makes a 2D character design look 3D, Mingjue Helen Chen designs a set for animation, and ex-Disney artist Chris Oatley helps you to turn pro. Elsewhere, Michael C Hayes paints a knight and Brian Froud reveals his art influences.

Issue 112
September 2014

The Pre-Raphaelite art movement provides the inspiration for Corrado Vanelli, whose painting graces our cover, and Katarina Sokolova who reimagines Ophelia. Elsewhere, Donglu Yu constructs a city using textures, Mike Corriero concepts fantasy beasts, and Wylie Beckert translates her digital skills to traditional media.

Issue 111
August 2014

Jeff Simpson's eerie cover image sets the tone for this issue, as we reveal the secrets to painting dark, unsettling art with Anthony Scott Waters, Xavier Collette, and the man behind many iconic horror posters, Graham Humphreys. We also talk to Les Edwards, whose fantasy and horror work is instantly recognisable.

CATCH UP ON WHAT YOU'VE MISSED!

Issue 110
July 2014

Find out why so many artists, including John Howe, Lorland Chen and Brom, are attracted to illustrating stories that have passed down the centuries. We explore the comic art of Claire Wendling, Cynthia Sheppard brings a Greek goddess to life, and Tran Nguyen reinterprets the classic damsel in distress narrative.

Issue 109
June 2014

On Batman's 75th anniversary, we look at the dark art of Gotham's infamous vigilante, with imagery from Jock, Frank Miller, Neal Adams and more, while DC Comics' Ken Lashley creates our cover. We also explore Simone Bianchi's sketchbook, draw a Wolverine fight scene and find out how a Fables cover is painted.

Issue 108
May 2014

This issue we explore the art of the Seven Kingdoms with our Game Of Thrones special. Mélanie Delon paints Daenerys Targaryen for our cover and we talk to the key creatives on the show, and even chat with its creator George RR Martin about his vision for the stories. All this, plus even more great art, tips and workshops!

Issue 107
April 2014

By adding in beautifully detailed Taiwanese aboriginal costumes, cover artist Han-Yuan Yu has given his manga art a distinct look. Christopher Moeller paints comics in a traditional way, Serge Kolesov depicts a mermaid from a new perspective, and Wayne Reynolds tells us how he turned a boring art job into something fun!

Issue 106
March 2014

Celebrating the power of book illustration, we speak to Cory Godbey about his ethereal art and to Tony DiTerlizzi about his motion picture-inspiring art. Cory and Tony give us tutorials, too, on creature design and book covers, respectively. There's a studio profile on Tor Books, and a look at Brian Froud's latest work.

Issue 105
February 2014

We talk to the artists behind some of the most beautiful female paintings in the universe in our pin-up special – from a sassy roller-girl covergirl to amazing art from Adam Hughes, Serge Birault and Sorayama. Elsewhere, we delve into the world of tattoo art, and give advice on artist's block and softening your painting style.

Issue 104
January 2014

This month's artists will help you push your painting skills into untapped areas, with advice on creating art from smoke brushes, developing your artistic voice, plus our traditional art workshop on painting a frog princess! Simon Dominic revives an old concept, and we reveal the winners of this year's Rising Stars contest.

Issue 103
Christmas 2014

Discover the art skills you'll need to break into the competitive video games industry, as we speak to the people behind The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, Remember Me and Mass Effect. Traditional fantasy artist Tom Kidd paints a book cover, and Dave Kendall puts Manga Studio 5 to the test.

Artist Q&A

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The ImagineFX panel
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Damian Schouweiler
Damian's worked in games for over a decade. He started his career as a 3D character artist, but now mostly applies his extensive skill set to concept art and illustration.
www.anotherdamian.deviantart.com

Ross 'Flynn' Tran
A designer and creator, Ross has created the character Echo for the film Earth to Echo. He's now pursuing other endeavours in the entertainment industry.
www.rosstran.net

Naiha Raza
Naiha is a self-taught digital artist from Pakistan. She works in the video games industry not only as an illustrator, but also as a graphic designer.
www.nraza.deviantart.com

Corrado Vanelli
Corrado works full-time in an automation factory and he paints only in his free time. He says he pays the bills with the day job and realises his dreams through his art.
http://ifxm.ag/ifx-cvanelli

Dave Brasgalla
Dave is a graphic designer and illustrator from Stockholm who works digitally and traditionally. He recently organised the Northern Light Workshop series.
www.pixelhuset.se

John Petersen
An education in biological and pre-medical illustration led US-based John to become an animator and designer at Engineering Systems, Inc. He's also a freelance illustrator.
www.petersenart.com

Question

Can you help me design leather and metal fantasy armour please?
Jenny Tsai, England

ImagineFX VIDEO WORKSHOP

Answer
Damian replies

When I need to come up with a suit of fantasy armour I prefer working fast and loose at the start, and tightening up the piece once I've established the overall silhouette. I usually start with a pre-existing paper-doll 3D model, and take that into a painting program that features real-time mirroring of your strokes, such as Painter, SketchBook Pro or Alchemy. I prefer Alchemy because its simplicity prevents me from getting too detailed early on. From there it's just a matter of blocking in big shapes in black and white over the paper-doll. I find that working fast using this mirror mode has a sort of Rorschach effect on me, which stimulates ideas.

Once I have the basic overall image blocked in, I take that image into Photoshop and start cleaning up and tightening the image. I break the armour up by material and differentiate the overall value and value range of these from each other using the Levels tool. From here it's a process of rationalising some of the loose work by rendering form and colour.

Once the design and materials are clearly depicted, this is now ready to be passed down the pipeline to be turned into a 3D model or illustration.

Step-by-step:
Using mirroring to inspire shape ideas
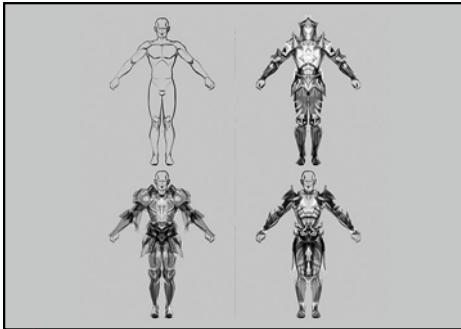
1 Toggling between black and white, I loosely block in the big shapes over the paper-doll 3D model. During this stage I try to scribble in weird, meaningless details, and any mistakes or missteps can often work to my advantage. The mirroring process can bring order to these seemingly errant details.

2 Next, I clean up and make sense of the elements that I've loosely blocked in. I usually use Photoshop during this phase. Next, I try to pick up interesting details and distribute them to multiple areas across the armour. This helps to unify the design. I also give the armour a more consistent volume and form.

Soft Light 22% opacity

Soft Light 39% opacity
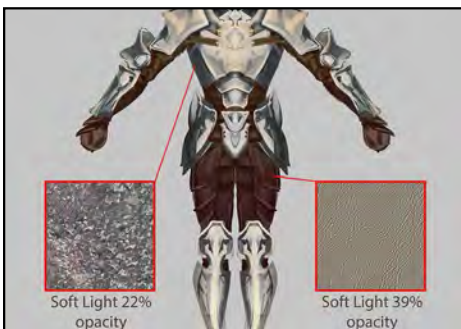
3 Now it's time to differentiate the surface properties of the materials. I give metallic surfaces a broader spectrum of values, while leather surfaces have a shallower range. Photo reference – lichen and leather – is added as a Soft Light layer on a low Opacity to further differentiate the surfaces and add a bit of detail.

Question
What's the best way to mix photo realism with a loose painting style?
Aisha Jones, US
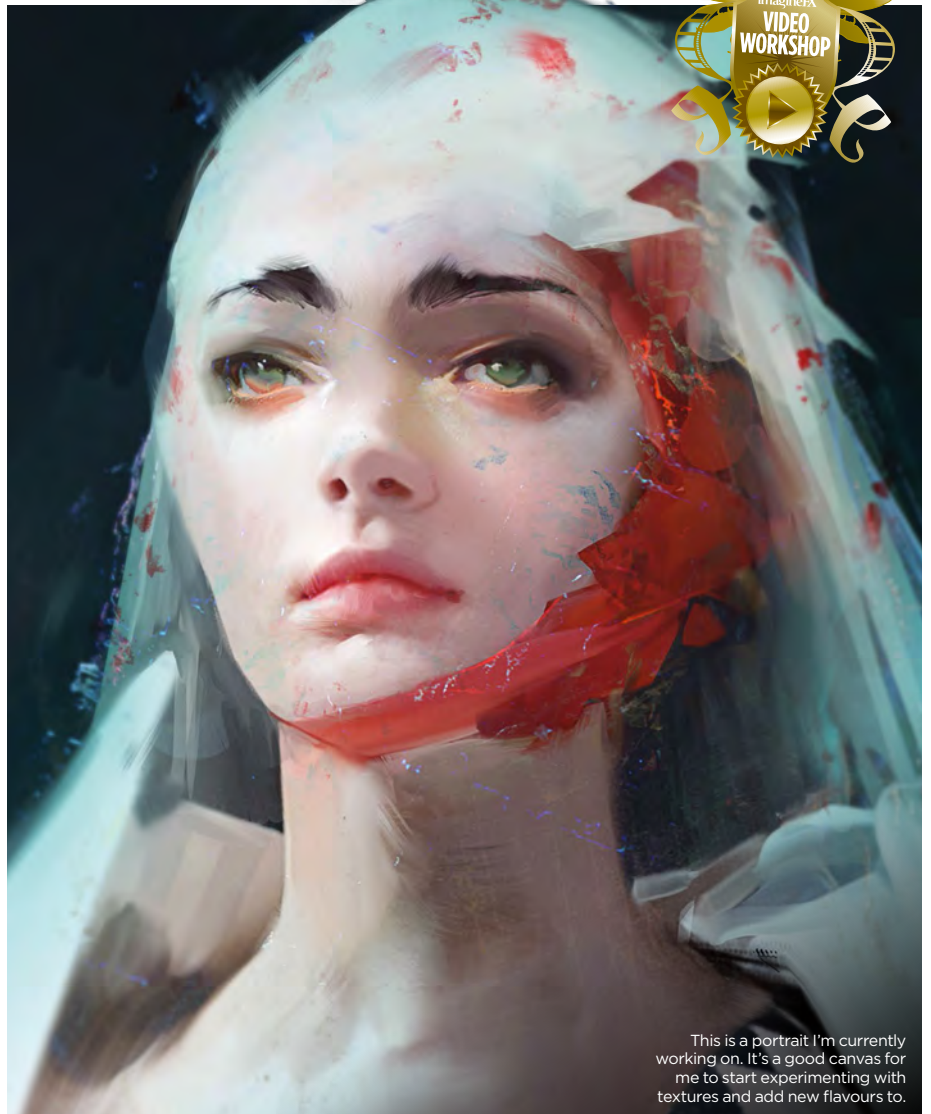
This is a portrait I'm currently working on. It's a good canvas for me to start experimenting with textures and add new flavours to.

Answer
Ross replies

When I try to bring new flavours to a piece that's almost finished, I try to approach it in an organic, playful and experimental way. I never know how a piece is going to turn out, but that's the joy in discovering new things you haven't even thought of when embarking on an image.

Here's a portrait I've been working on: it's at a stage where I feel I can play with textures and experiment, using a range of techniques to drive the piece forward to a different place. I have no idea where it'll go, but I'm excited to see what digital techniques can do to the piece and give it a different perspective to what I've previously envisioned. The hard part is to be able to open your mind to enable the piece you've been working on to be altered and played with.

I now look for photos and textures that are stock-free and have something special in them that I find inspiring. It could be a small pattern, or the silkiness of a fabric, or even the way the light's being cast on a surface. Once I have some images, I insert them on top and play with the settings and blending modes and see what happens. This is a structured way to achieve happy accidents. I then rearrange them and eliminate parts to fit my piece.

Artist's secret
COLOR RANGE
This is a quick tool that grabs a similar grouping of colours and values and selects them. You can then copy the selection to a new layer and experiment with it however you wish.

Question
How can I recreate the look of traditional media in my digital fantasy art?
Adam Martin, England

Answer
John replies

Photoshop's Mixer Brush does a pretty good job of simulating oils and pastels. I think it works best as a blender, with the settings at Moist, 5 per cent Load, 50 per cent Mix and 100 per cent Flow. It's really a tool that you'll have to play with a lot to find your preference, because it works in so many different ways. I like to use the Fan and Blunt-Round blenders: try some of the presets to see what works for you.

I start by using a standard textured brush to lay down my tones and flat areas of colour, then blend them with the Mixer brush. You can do this with a photo to make it look like an oil painting. I almost always select the Clean After Each Stroke option to prevent my colours from becoming muddy. When blending, especially flesh tones, try to blend along the contours of each shape. So for arms and fingers I always try to stroke transversely around the form instead of down its length.

Artist's secret
MIX UP THE COLOUR
Add colour variation by creating an Overlay layer and going crazy with a textured scatter brush. Turn on Hue Jitter in the Color Dynamics panel.

I try to avoid mixing the colours too much. For this character I want a rough, painterly look rather than a smooth, airbrushed style.

Stroke direction

Your blending strokes should follow the contour of the figure's forms. Use a back-and-forth motion to keep from pushing colour too far in one direction.

Question
I need help drawing overhanging vegetation. Any tips?
Mentari Perkasa, Indonesia

I've added vegetation to this earlier piece that I've revisited, to improve the scene. I want to create dangling vegetation around the platform's edges.

Answer
Ross replies

When approaching vegetation, think of it as layers building up. It will take multiple layers and a bit of patience, but the end result will be effective and easy to alter if you're not happy with something.

I want to introduce a method where you can achieve the same accurate effect by simple steps of what I call 'indicating'. In other words, this is a time-effective way of painting the vegetation without becoming bogged down in the details. There'll be times when you'll make the mistake of adding details on to already established

details that either don't improve the image or even make it worse. So I want to break down my approach to painting effective-looking vegetation into three simple steps.

The first is the base, which I treat it as a gradient made up of the soil of your vegetation. Next is the core, where I introduce the bulk of the plants and show the viewer what this vegetation is mostly made up of. Finally there's the detailing stage, which is my chance to touch up and pick out a couple of areas to show a clear, sharp indication of what the whole plant consists of.

Question
Got any advice for drawing a scary skull that's not too fantastical in appearance?
Jakob Ellis, Australia

Answer
Damian replies

Painting a scary-looking skull begins with painting an accurate skull, and then exaggerating its shapes and features. I start with a lot of the same landmarks that I use to construct a face, and look for the major plane changes that occur along the edge of the face, from the ears along the border of the edge of the cheek, down to the corner of the mouth.

Once I have a relatively solid base I start to craft the negative space to give the skull's various features a menacing, barbed look. Mark-making is also important, because the abrasive usage of brushes adds to the sense of viciousness to the skull's character. I make sure that any further rendering reinforces the jagged elements that I continue to infuse the piece with.

Finishing the painting with spooky lighting enhances the sense of dread.

I start by painting a structurally accurate skull. Emphasising the dramatic recesses that are present in a more representative skull can add to its visual impact.

ImagineFX
VIDEO WORKSHOP

Look for aggressive shapes that are already present in a skull. Play up the concavity, and the aggressive angularity of the cheek, eye-socket and mandibular recesses.
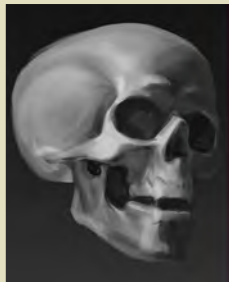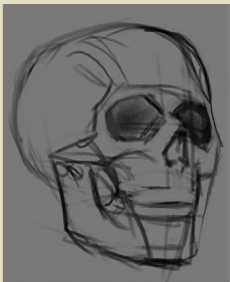
Artist's secret
EERIE RIM LIGHT
Adding some spectacular rim-lighting can be the icing on the cake, but you should always start your piece with a strong singular light source, before moving on to rim-light embellishments.

Step-by-step: Creating vegetation
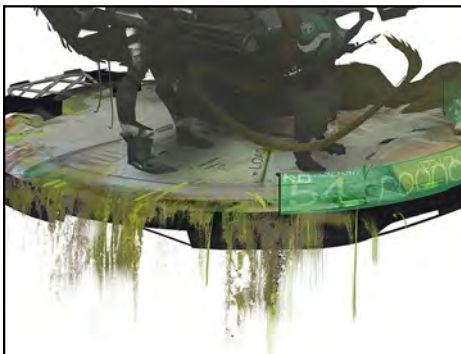
1 First I lay down the base – the foundation for the vegetation – and then layer the levels of details on top. I try to use varying colours with similar hues and tones to add vibrancy, but keep things simple. I ensure my brushstrokes follow the direction of the design/gravity.

2 Now I add the details to the base. This takes place on a new layer so that it's clean and editable. This is my chance to expand on the core idea of the plant's nature and appearance. I make sure that I use a lighter colour compared to that of the base.
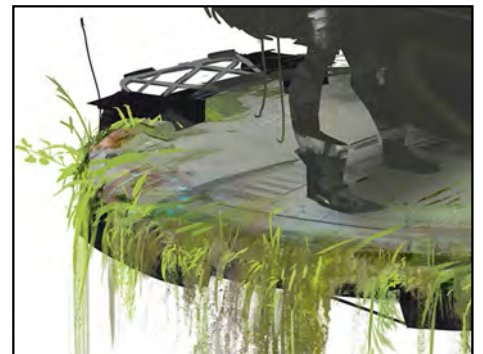
3 Once I'm happy with the levels of varying vegetation, it's time for the detailing and finishing stage. This is where I add individual plants and leaves to areas that will indicate the design of the whole thing. A few more finishing touches and the image is finished.

ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Question
I'd like some advice on painting a lantern in a dark room, please!
Mike Everley, England

Answer
Corrado replies

With just a couple of art tricks it's pretty easy to create a realistic depiction of lamp light. For this article I imagine a lamp on a table in a dark room. I recommend searching online for some photo references, which should help you to understand the workings of a real lamp.

There are two key points to bear in mind: the halo effect and the light direction. The halo effect is fundamental because this gives the scene a realistic feeling. It's important to understand that the halo effect must extend all around the light source. The lamp's glare becomes more intense the closer you are to it, so you must use colours such as white and yellow. Move further away from the lamp and the colour also changes: the white fades into another colour, such as red or blue.

The second important point is the light direction. A lamp is a point light source and this means that shadows are projected all around the lamp. Consider this aspect when you create the shadows on the objects around the lamp. Try imagining a series of lines with one point in the centre of the lamp and the other point that touches the edges of objects near to the lamp.

Gather reference photos and you'll notice how the lamp's intense light fades into the surrounding darkness.

Artist's secret

PAPER TEXTURE AND THE SMUDGE TOOL

When you use the smudge tool in Painter, change the paper texture to add interesting effects in the painting. This is perfect for increasing the complexity of a uniform area that risks being too flat. Use the smudge tool and different textures on the same area. The result will be more interesting.

Step-by-step: Depict realistic lamplight

1 I create an image with two layers: the background with the basic colour of the scene (brown) and one layer containing the foreground elements (the lamp and table). Using the Pencil and Charcoal tools I define the main shape of the lamp and trace a line to define the table surface. I only use red, yellow and dark brown. The first simple sketch comprises some quick lines.

2 I define the halo and the shadows on the table. I select the background layer and define the halo effect with the Charcoal and Smudge tools. Note the colour variations: yellow on the centre of the lamp and red all around. I use a similar technique on the table and under the lamp. I create a circular shadow. On the table, the light grows more intense closer to the lamp.
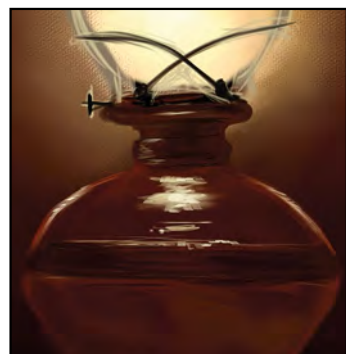
3 I continue working on the foreground layer, and paint the body of the lamp using Oil brushes and the Loaded Palette knife. It's important to add highlight effects and reflections on this glossy surface. I've chosen to depict a classic lamp design, but feel free to define your own lamp with a unique shape and colours, which will suit your fantasy environment.

4 I add some details to finish the work. I refine the glass by adding reflections and highlights. Remember that glass reflects all the elements in the room, so it's crucial to reproduce some distorted shapes on its surface. It's not necessary to reproduce precise reflections; some lines and fast brush strokes will convey the fact that the lamp isn't the only object in the scene.

Your questions answered...

Question
What textures could I use when painting an alien creature?
Catriona Pahich, US

This alien character concept originated from my reference texture. I let the forms in the texture guide me as I sculpted his crustacean-like features.

Answer
Dave replies

One of the fun things about drawing aliens is that they can exhibit all kinds of bizarre characteristics. Start by thinking about where your alien comes from. A dry world? One with heavy gravity? Is it amphibious? Or just a good old-fashioned rock monster? Some forethought about the creature's origins and environment can help to inspire you when it comes to textures.

For this question I photograph some plant and fungus textures – hopefully, they'll help with my alien's appearance. I come across an oak tree with fantastic round growths all around its base, which reminds me of the horns and knobs that are visible on some species of crustaceans. I let the shapes suggest a form for the alien's head, and then use a Chalk brush to sketch its general silhouette.

Textures that I photograph during a walk through a nature reserve suggest a knobbed shell of some kind – I imagined tiny eyes on each bump!

The tree texture sits above that on a layer set to Overlay, and I draw on top of both with my blocky Chalk brush, playing with the forms and pulling out features such as the eye bulbs. I set the Eraser tool to use the same brush that I'm drawing with. A bit of striated fungus is perfect for making a strange gill-like mouth. Even though I've comped up this alien from forest textures, he now looks like he originates from a distant water-covered planet. Have fun and let your textures inspire you as you work!

Question
How can I depict a person's face made of glass?
Dancing Queen, Scotland
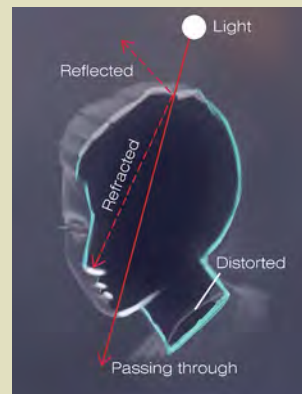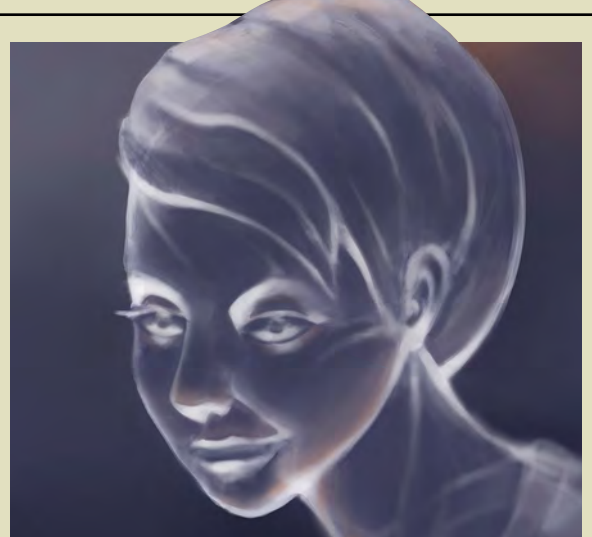
Combine the principles of light to come up with a form. The type of glass will determine the appearance of the face.

Light not only reflects off glass but passes through, refracts and distorts.

Answer
Naiha replies

When painting a glass face, remember that highlights will appear on the opposite surface and wherever the glass 'turns'. This is usually where the shadows will be on any other opaque material, such as wood or plastic. Not all light will pass through the object. Some surface reflection will also be visible where the light hits the glass. There'll be no sharp highlights on this surface. However, sharp highlights will form where the glass turns 'inwards', such as the bottom of the nose and the chin if the light source is present above the face. This is the surface that directly receives the light passing through the glass.

I start by sketching a face in white. Then I add the darkest colour in my palette to the centre where the light will pass through. I keep almost all the boundaries lighter because these are curved surfaces. I distort a few of the lines that pass behind the glass face to enhance the three-dimensional feel of the face.

Artist's secret
THINKING AHEAD
When painting a glass object it's always best to set up your background beforehand. This will help you choose the colours that you can use to make the glass as realistic as possible.

Question
I can't get the hang of painting dust in my environments. Please help!
Wallace O'Brian, Canada

Answer
Dave replies

Dust is made up of many things, some of which you'd likely rather not know about! From common household dust to hazy desert scenes, a key characteristic is that dust obeys the laws of gravity – even if very slowly at times. Dust kicked up into the air will eventually settle. When this happens it'll reveal and accentuate forms, much like a light snowfall.

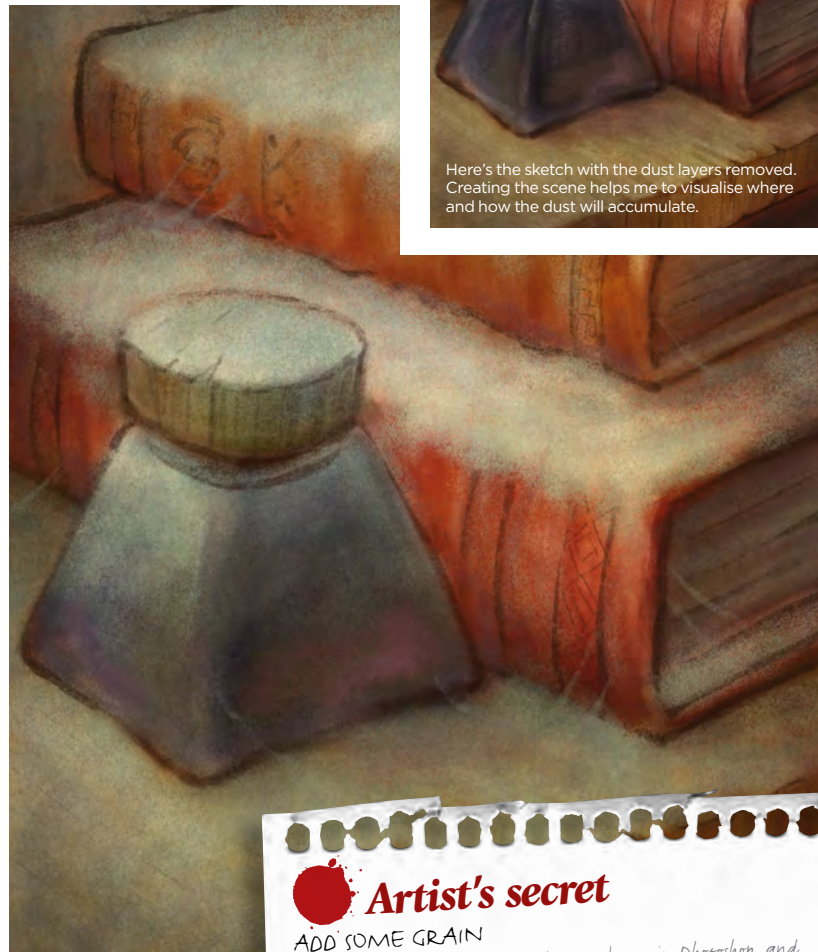Let's look at a common depiction of dust: heavy accumulation of indoor dust over time. In most instances, indoor dust will settle on horizontal surfaces and is roughly monochrome. Wash out the colours on visible surfaces to accentuate this effect. When you handle the details of your scene, remember to keep visualising the dust settling from above. Heavier dust can gather in corners, and cobwebs can be placed strategically to enhance the effect.

I paint the table and objects on top of it, and then make a Screen layer for the dust. I use a grainy brush to create instant texture, and choose a blueish grey. Once I've painted the main dust layer, I make another layer with a lighter grey for highlights. Introducing desaturated darker blues in the shadows gives a sense of depth to the dust coating. If things start looking too bright or snowy then reduce the Opacity of your dust layers.

Here's the sketch with the dust layers removed. Creating the scene helps me to visualise where and how the dust will accumulate.

Notice how the dust accumulation tapers off as the surface of the bottle curves slightly towards the vertical.

Artist's secret
ADD SOME GRAIN
Create your dust fade-out on its own layer in Photoshop, and use Layer>Layer Style>Pattern Overlay to add grain. On a tablet, try a grainy brush on a layer set to Screen or Overlay.

Question
Can you help me paint intricate patterned metal?
Brickwater, US

The finished Gothic gate has an aged look, which I've achieved using Painter's Square Conte tool and a dark brown.

Answer
Corrado replies

Gothic patterns and decorations are fascinating because they come together in an intricate composition, and feature a range of elements such as human figures, flowers and trees. Avoid depicting simple, repetitive patterns because Gothic art is dynamic, and shapes must change within it.

Another fundamental point is the presence of a specific object in the composition. You have to introduce focal elements such as a human figure, a beast or a complex flower. Then you need to connect the various figures using decorations. Try changing the design of the decoration during the painting process: you can have some parts with either the same or similar shapes or patterns, but if you use always the same elements then the final result may look unadventurous and won't be not true of the art period.

For this question I create a very simple structure in which the main subject is a skull, and all the decorations are symmetrical around the skull. If you use Painter, I suggest using the Mirror Painting tool. This enables you to create and study the main shape in a few minutes, working on only half the image. If your software doesn't have a similar tool, simply imagine that you're working on half a painting, then duplicate and flip the picture.

During the painting process I activate Painter's Mirror Painting tool, and I work only on half an image.

Question
How can I paint an environment from two different perspectives, but keep everything accurate?
Anna Golin, US

Answer
John replies

If you want to be accurate, consider creating a 3D mock-up of your environment, if for no other reason than to help you with perspective and to help with orientation. This can be a time-consuming process, but in the long run it's worth it because you can play with camera angles, enabling you to generate a composition that you might not have considered. Furthermore, if you're doing it for a client, you can send them different camera angles of the mocked-up environment, which they can choose from.

Once you've built the scene you can move the camera around and quickly render multiple images. There are a number of free programs you can download to get

> Getting the perspective right on the spiral staircases would have been difficult without accurate geometry to use as a base.

started, such as SketchUp or Blender. I'm using 3ds Max for this question. You can also go the James Gurney route and build a complete clay and styrofoam maquette sculpture of your environment and use studio lighting to obtain a super accurate reference. However, this takes tremendous time and effort, so it really depends on how quickly you need to get the job done.

Step-by-step: Mock up a street scene in 3D

1 This is an aerial view of the scene. The commission calls for an old city environment. I create boxes and shape extrusions. Then I lay out a street pattern and build everything in between. I add spheres here and there for dome shapes, and some rooftop structures for detail.

2 Here's an aerial view mock-up. I like this angle, but the view needs to be at street level. I'm trying to achieve a balanced composition while retaining dramatic detail. The commission calls for spiral staircases going up to nowhere, some reaching over 100 feet in the sky.

3 This is the winning angle. The environment needs to have a prominent empty lot, a trash-filled ditch and a legible street sign. From here I can project a rendering on to illustration board, or just start painting right over the 3D model image.
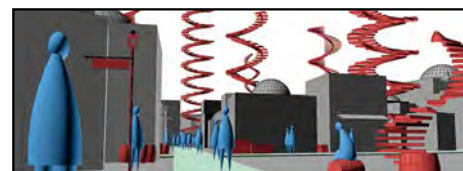
All creatures great and small

Our favourite artists share the secrets behind their original creature designs. Come a little closer – they won't bite…

Ken Barthelmey

Cinematic creature artist Ken says environments help to establish his designs

"My painting New World, shown here, was one of my very first creature designs, which I did for a personal project. I tried to design a unique and never-seen-before creature. After I finished the design, I wanted to show the creatures in their living environment. These enormous animals need a huge environment to live in. I had lots of fun building this world.
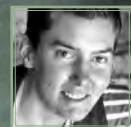
I often undertake personal projects in a bid to improve my painting techniques. I start with a simple pencil sketch that I use as a base. Then I scan the sketch and colour it in Photoshop. This is the process I followed when I designed the cruentulodon, which is inspired by the look of the real-life velociraptor. It's pretty much an alien dinosaur. I took the design further and showed cruentulodons in a dynamic hunting scene, chasing smaller preys. I tried to capture the strengths and velocity of this big predator. It's like a shark bursting into a shoal of fish.

I recently started to working in 3D, which is still pretty new to me. I sculpt and texture my designs in ZBrush, before creating the shading and the final render in Modo. References from frogs, snakes and geladas come in very handy."
www.theartofken.com

> ❝ An eye for both realism and imagination is necessary, if you're going to create a good creature design ❞

KEN'S TIP

STRIKE A BALANCE
"An eye for both realism and imagination is necessary, if you're going to create a good creature design. If you make a design too realistic, it'll very quickly look boring. And vice versa: if you design a creature too fantastical or abstract, then it'll look unbelievable and silly. I personally love to see actual anatomy in a creature design; this gives it always a more natural look. Each design is a new challenge, but having a knowledge of anatomy and a big interest in science is always a huge benefit."

Terryl Whitlatch

Terryl applies her palaeontology skills and a dose of reality to her creature art

"My training is in vertebrate zoology and palaeontology, and I still do a lot of palaeo reconstruction illustration, such as in a previous image of mine, Ancient Wing. I was asked to do a study of an early bird, when avian beaks were appearing in the late Jurassic period.

The media that I use is pencil, digital copier and Copic Sketch markers. When using the markers, I apply them the same way as transparent watercolours, working from light to dark.

Lions squabbling over the last remnants of a kill inspired an Argument of Gryphons, shown here. I imagined what real-life gryphons could look like, and how they would behave. Protoceratops also inspired the piece. When ancient peoples first came across Protoceratops skulls, they thought those were the skulls of gryphons.

I love to do a lot of goofy animals and creatures, especially those based on puns. I think a lot of them come about unconsciously due to a childhood immersed in the works of Dr. Seuss. When I'm stuck, I quickly sketch a silly animal, and this helps me get back to the task at hand."

www.talesofamalthea.com ➡

66 When I'm stuck, I quickly sketch a silly animal, and this really helps me get back to the task at hand **99**

TERRYL'S TIP

PUT A FACE ON IT

"When designing imaginary animals or beings, it's always best to keep real nature in the forefront, because that's the anchor of the imagination, and makes imaginary things seem real, so that the viewer can identify with them. An idea in the abstract is fine, but even then the human mind is wired to 'put a face on it', as George Lucas would say: some sort of physicality that our senses can interpret and allow us to interact with it."

Allen Williams

Pacific Rim's monstrous alien invaders were concepted by Allen

"Sentinel, shown below, is a personal piece that was an exploration of a creature that I want to include in a larger painting. It's intended to be a guardian figure and sphynx-like. It's quadruped form isn't based on anything specific, but definitely resembles a dog or cat, which is magnified by the pose.

I tend to change the way I work a lot: sometimes I begin with lines, at other times using shapes. I can even find forms using my eraser as much as my pencil.

I don't do many dragons, but with any creature I look for the character within. A good example is my image Decrepit, which is a four-legged dragon based on a dog we used to have. As he grew older he developed arthritis and began to hobble around a bit, although it never seemed to diminish his personality. He was a great dog."

www.ijustdraw.com

> 66 **Look for textures and patterns that create a pleasing visual rhythm** 99

ALLEN'S TIP

VISUAL RHYTHM

"When creating texture in a drawing you can either reveal the texture of the medium you're working on, or create it from scratch. I combine both of these things. It's important to understand that texture is surface pattern on a smaller scale. Look for textures and patterns that create a pleasing visual rhythm."

Aaron Blaise

Aaron reveals that world-building enables him to craft his creatures' look

"These are two images I created for a story I was developing a few years ago. I love the world of elves and fairies, and wanted to put my own spin on that world. They're my early attempts at what some of these creatures might look like. The project itself is still under wraps so I can't really talk about it in too much detail, but these characters are explorations of the world they live in."

www.creatureartteacher.com ➤

AARON'S TIP

ALWAYS EXPERIMENT
"In using photographic textures in your character work, remember to be experimental. Tree bark, gravel, rocks: all of these surfaces can make great skin textures as well. Experimentation leads to wonderful discoveries, and will get you out of that painting rut."

❝ I love the world of elves and fairies and wanted to put my own spin on that world ❞

Bobby Chiu

An art teacher at Schoolism.com, Bobby created beasties for Alice in Wonderland

"A Different Kind of Unicorn, pictured below, is an image I created as part of a series of reimagined unicorns. I like the way he turned out because he's inspired by large animals such as elephants and bighorn sheep, but you can tell by the lighting, proportions and pose that he's quite petite.

I like to include an element of disguise in my paintings, as seen here in Carrotnose and the Hareplane, and I often try to tell a story. What do you make of this painting? It's a favourite of mine from my own collection because it leaves you wondering not only what happened moments before, but what's going to happen next!

I love to show people or funny-looking characters getting along – despite all of their differences. Often if we can just get past the little details, we see that we're all largely the same, and we're all looking to connect and make friends!

Another aspect that I try to get into my art are situations that the viewer can relate to. Even though the setup might be fantastical and feature bizarre-looking creatures, if there's an obvious human behaviour hook, I grab it with both hands."

www.imaginismstudios.com ➠

66 If you want to make your audience feel good, illustrate a scene in medias res and leave hints as to what events might have led up to what you're depicting **99**

BOBBY'S TIP

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

"If you want to make your audience feel good, illustrate a scene in medias res and leave hints as to what events might have led up to what you're depicting. People love interpreting clues and being rewarded with understanding. Making sure your audience sees everything you put into an ensemble illustration is difficult. Use colour to direct the eye where you'd like it to go, so the viewer can catch all the little details."

Simon Dominic

Simon's a Chesley Award-winner whose creature art appears in the Exposé books

"I have a thing for creatures with big heads and no eyes, and it's so rare I get to paint one, which I did in the piece, Cloaked Sand Demon (below left). This guy was once a fallen angel, killed in battle and brought back to life in mutated form, and now he's furious. Who wouldn't be?

For reference I often use a photograph of myself, looking devious. That's how ugly I am. This sly character in Forest Goblin (right) lures unsuspecting travellers by use of a captured spirit, and then… bang! He's on them, making for an alarming end to a pleasant stroll in the woods.

This beauty, Giant Bee Swarm (below right) is the evolved version of a boss character painted for a Wizard of Oz-themed game. I'd never painted a bee before and I was surprised to find they're very hairy creatures when you get up close. Kind of like caterpillars, in that respect.

I do enjoy painting monsters doing what they do best, namely engaging in lunatic levels of carnage. Black Horned Behemoth (main image) is the evolved version of a peaceful creature who likes nothing better than to sit in the forest and watch the sunset. It just shows you should be careful around giant horned creatures – they can be unpredictable."

www.painterly.co.uk

SIMON'S TIP

VARY MOODS

"Try and vary the moods of your creatures, if possible, and give them a back story. Don't just go for the enraged look; try for alternatives and maybe make your creature triumphant or pensive, calculating or surprised, or even scared."

"I do enjoy painting monsters doing what they do best, namely engaging in lunatic levels of carnage"

Sketchbook

Wes Burt

The Massive Black ace opens his Moleskine and reveals the thinking behind his striking visions

Artist PROFILE

Wes Burt
COUNTRY: US

Wes works out of San Francisco at the offices of Massive Black, as a concept artist. He's produced art for films and games, most recently the Dinobots for Transformers: Age of Extinction, and The Sims 4. He's a huge fan of sketching on paper, either in a Moleskine or on Bristol pads of paper that are scattered around his desk.
www.wesleyburt.tumblr.com

BATMAN
"I've always been a big Batman fan and one day at a coffee shop I started sketching out a loose idea I had in my head for a Batman cover. I wanted to make Robin a bit different, almost like a mutant."

JUMBLE
"Sometimes I start working up drawings of forms and shapes in a more abstract manner, and then bring it all together through rendering and uniform lighting. It's a real mix of improvisation and retooling."

FRENCH JAEGER PILOT
"I did this one after seeing Pacific Rim. I was just having fun drawing at a brunch place in town."

THUNDERCAT
"This started as a quick sketch of a musician, Thundercat, sort of taken into a sky pirate RPG idea. I took the original sketch a lot further for this drawing and worked up the whole body."

FLYING LOTUS
"As I was working on the Thundercat drawing, I had ideas for a compatriot of his, Flying Lotus."

"sometimes I start working up drawings of forms and shapes in an abstract manner…"

ENTANGLEMENT
"I had this image in my head of a page filled with a sea of heads – not quite a crowd of people, but forms flowing in and out of each other a bit and lots of interesting features to drift around and look at."

SOOTHSAYER
"This page started out as some random sketches and doodles, but quickly became all tied together and I worked it up as a character for a world I've been envisioning."

INKHEADS
"I've been experimenting a lot with these Mangaka flexible pens and markers. They have a great marker tip and really nice ink for my Moleskine pages."

HOMELESS
"This was done for a group art show about different neighbourhoods in San Francisco. It's an amalgamation of people and scenes I'd seen downtown and then remade through my imagination."

MOLESKINE
"This was a fun drawing I worked up for a group show in San Francisco, where each artist did a two-page spread in a Moleskine. They were all framed identically and it was cool to see all the different ideas and mediums each artist chose to work in for their pages."

DERVISH
"This image started fairly improvisational, but I found some interesting lines and shapes in the early sketch phase and then the idea really took hold."

"I found some interesting lines and shapes in the sketch phase and then the idea took hold"

LUCHADORES
"There's a storefront in the Mission district in San Francisco that has a huge wall of luchadore masks for sale. I was always interested in the way it looked, and thought it would make for a great sketch."

Norse-inspired Smite god Freya, the Queen of the Valkyries, is described as the object of desire for every man and god.

Mercury: the Roman messenger god. Hi-Rez mythology is highly stylised but still based on real research.

HI-REZ

A games studio that's going from strength to strength with its gorgeously detailed, massively mutiplayer madness

What's the best thing about working at Hi-Rez?" muses concept artist Brian Wells. "Well, I get to work with people who are very good at what they do, and Hi-Rez lets them do that. I'm aware that's two things, but I'm okay with that!"

Based in Atlanta in the US, Hi-Rez Studios was founded in 2005 by self-made multimillionaire Erez Goren, and Todd Harris, who's still the company's chief operating officer today. From the very start the company made the perhaps unusual decision to focus solely on online multiplayer games, and currently has three in its portfolio, all with very active user bases and all free to play (with optional purchases in-game).

Global Agenda, which launched in 2010, had the distinction of being the first free-to-play game to appear on Steam, the PC's de facto digital game distribution service. In 2012 this was followed by Tribes: Ascend, a high-speed flying game and reboot of a much older series of titles. Smite was launched in March 2014 and breaks out of the sci-fi mould. It's a mythology-themed MOBA with cartoon-like visuals.

"We have about 50 artists on staff," says Todd. "Since the launch of Smite we've grown this department a lot, so we can release more content with every patch. Those 50 ➤➤
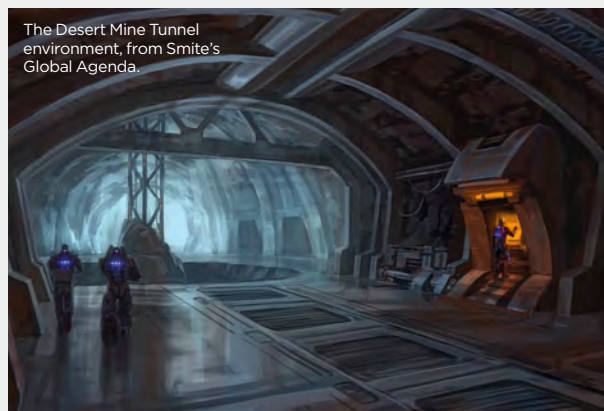
The Desert Mine Tunnel environment, from Smite's Global Agenda.
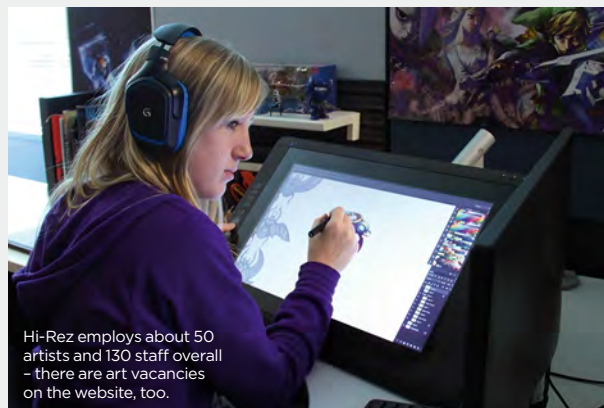
Hi-Rez employs about 50 artists and 130 staff overall – there are art vacancies on the website, too.

❝ I get to work with people who are very good at what they do – and Hi-Rez lets them do that ❞

LOCATION: Atlanta, Georgia, US
PROJECTS: Smite
OTHER PROJECTS: Global Agenda, Tribes: Ascend
WEB: www.hirezstudios.com

RASHAD FOUX

3D artist Rashad created character models for Smite

Do ideas or concepts for one title ever end up being adapted and used for a different one?
Absolutely. There are larger cases, like how Smite was originally going to be a Global Agenda-themed MOBA (multiplayer online battle arena). And then there are smaller cases too, where we take characters, themes or ideas and cross-promote them between our games. One example is the Tribes skins for our Smite characters.

How much feedback do you get from fans and players about your designs, and does that influence future design decisions?
As far as art goes, we take a lot of fan feedback and suggestions into consideration when we decide on what projects we're going to be doing. The idea for Swagni [a character design] came from the floaty/nonchalant run animation we used on Agni, when Smite was still in Beta, which a long-time fan of our game designed for us.

How does needing to design for a large variety of hardware, while still being playable online, affect your work?
In design terms, it often restricts how crazy our visual ideas can be. We have to keep our textures around 1,024x1,024 pixels, and our bone count for each character under 75. With those limitations, we're often forced to stick to large details that will read easily from a distance, while also making sure they don't appear blurry up close.

Do you have any tips for younger or less-experienced artists looking to get into the world of concept art or 3D design?
In my experience, there's no substitute for putting the time in – investing in your skills. If you're in college now, and you're just doing your classwork, that's not going to be enough to get into the industry. Much of your competition is going to be people in the games industry who work upwards of 40-50 hours a week, always creating, learning and honing their craft. Devoting an extra hour or two every day, to making your own things, or studying anatomy, won't seem like much on a day-to-day basis. But over the course of a year, or two years, or five years, the benefit to you as an artists can be incredible.
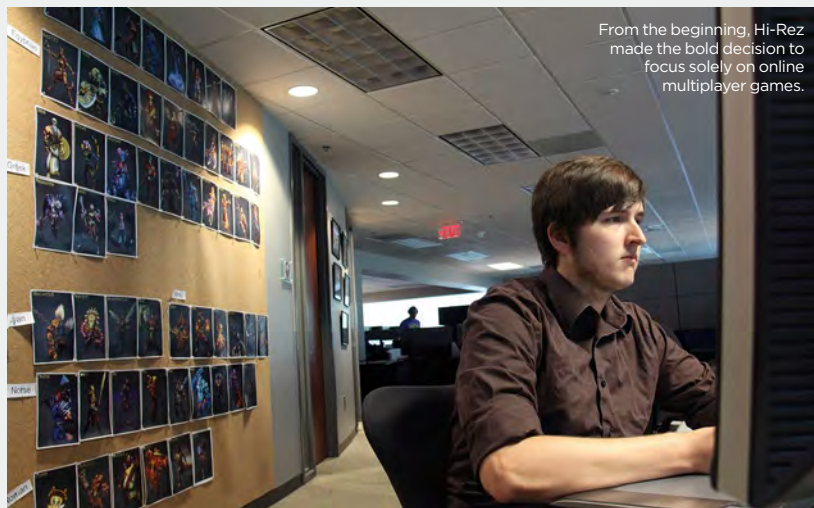
What's the best thing about working at Hi-Rez?
I get the chance to make something cool every day!

Rashad studied at the Art Institute of Atlanta. He's been painting commercially since 2007 and has worked at Hi-Rez for four years.
www.spiralpowered.com

Smite god Nemesis: her red-washed blade of divine retribution punishes hubris in others.

From the beginning, Hi-Rez made the bold decision to focus solely on online multiplayer games.

artists are all full-time employees, and when we need additional help on a temporary basis we use freelancers as well," he adds.

In a fiercely competitive area of the games market, Hi-Rez is doing incredibly well. Since the end of 2013, Todd says, the studio has grown from about 75 people to more than 130, and still has many openings for new positions – both in the art department and elsewhere. "The game industry is challenging and hit-driven, but to date we've been fortunate in that we've never had to do lay-offs."

Of course, from an art point of view one of the extra challenges when designing for any online game is ensuring that it runs smoothly but still looks great on an

enormous variety of different hardware configuration – whether it's the minimum recommended spec or a super-powerful gaming PC. "That certainly does pose challenges," says 3D character artist Jonathan Kuo. "Making assets that run smoothly for a variety of hardware set-ups requires technical planning when designing. Characters are often concepted with ideal polygon count in mind. Characters that are too complex could cost too many polygons, texture sheets or rig bones to be implemented efficiently."

The team has developed many techniques to enable the player's particular PC to automatically adjust the graphics

66 Making assets that run smoothly for a variety of hardware set-ups requires technical planning when designing 99

Smite's Tribes: Ascend game is a mythology-themed MOBO with cartoon-like visuals.
DIAMOND SWORD

CABRAKAN, DESTROYER OF MOUNTAINS

Brian Wells explains the thinking behind the design of a god character for Smite

Smite is loosely inspired by ancient mythologies – particularly Roman and Greek. Each player took on a particular god, and with more than 60 to choose from, the design team had to dig deep to find references. Inspired by a Mayan god, concept artist Brian Wells explains how Cabrakan was created...
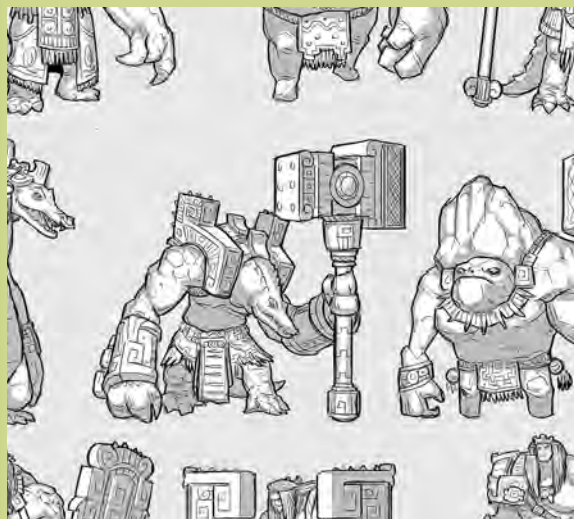

Lizard man
"When you have 60-plus gods, most of the easy archetypes are taken. Once the mandatory hot chick and the big guy with a sword are assigned, you get to design two-storey lizard men who can crush mountains. That's when it gets fun."
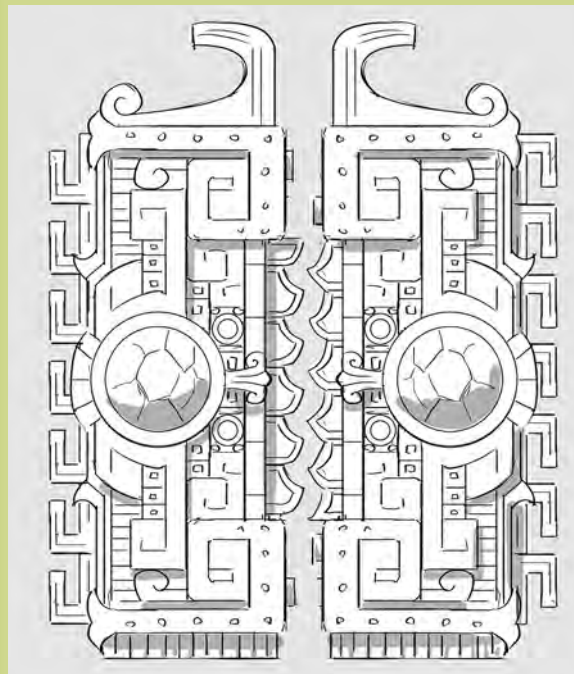
Rough, not ready
"All gods start out the same way: as a series of thumbnail roughs. This Cabrakan evolved from the combination of two out of 16 different thumbnails. Then it's comp, revise and repeat until we can get something that the art team really enjoys."
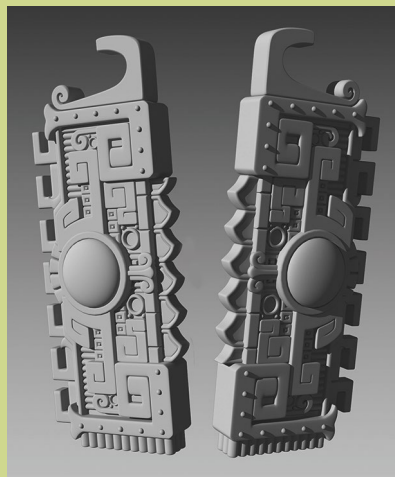
Taking liberties

"Some gods are very familiar to our audience. Cabrakan? Not so much. This gave us some freedom in his design. The dual-shield concept has no basis in lore, but is helps differentiate him from other tanks."

A touch of 3D

"Before I switched over to concept art, I used to work as a hard-surface modeller. This sometimes comes in handy: Cabrakan's shields were substantially faster to model than they would have been to paint from scratch. As a bonus, I was able to save the modellers some work and accelerate the whole process."

Hun Batz: the Howler Monkey God carries a festering grudge against his brother.

Hi-Rez have AAA budgets without the hassles of an external publisher.

In Smite, some gods have been given an amusing contemporary twist.

Roman-inspired Cupid, the God of Love. Probably not as cuddly as he looks.

➤➤ for optimum gameplay. "We have multiple methods of optimising assets," says Jonathan.

Another challenge with Smite's design was to ensure that the game at least tipped its hat to history in terms of ancient clothing, weapons and so on. "While Smite does take a more stylised approach to ancient mythology, a lot of research goes into the lore and culture each character stems from," says Jonathan.

"Brian often references weapons and attire that would be appropriate for each cultural pantheon when he creates character concepts. In the end though, the most important thing to have is a memorable and iconic character."
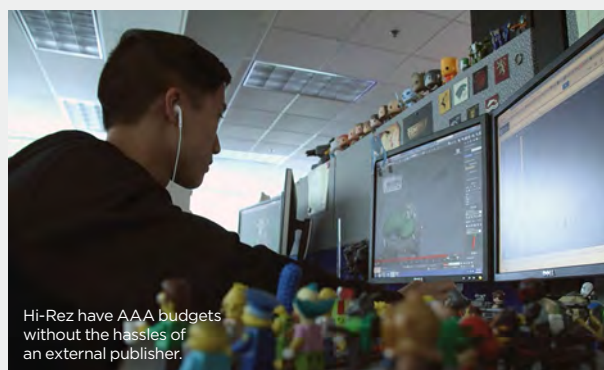
LORE OF THE GODS

"For a game with questionable educational value, Smite has surprisingly deep roots in history," Brian confirms. "We spend a considerable amount of time familiarising ourselves which each god's lore and the style of each pantheon is drawn substantially, although not whole-cloth, from the art, fashion, technology and architecture of ancient civilisations."

As with any online gaming community, Smite's players are nothing if not passionate, and regularly offer suggestions

> 66 **Despite Smite's stylised approach, a lot of research goes into the lore and culture of each character** 99

(or indeed plain old rants) about the design of the game and what they'd like to see in it. "In many cases though, we're bound by limitations of which the players aren't aware," Brian explains. "Technical, monetary, political, and even religious concerns can focus a design in a specific direction. In those cases, we may have to overlook a cool idea in favour of one that fits the situation."

Hi-Rez seems perfectly positioned for even more success in the future. As an independent company, Todd explains, it's able to deploy "AAA budgets but without the hassles of an external publisher dictating timelines, game design or art style". In short, Hi-Rez can do pretty much whatever it likes at the moment – and if current results are anything to go by, that's no bad thing. ▪

Odin, The Allfather, is another Smite god. He rides an eight-legged steed but only has one eye.

VIDEO WORKSHOP

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

64

70 76 84

This issue:

Photoshop
IMPROVE YOUR CREATURE ART

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Aaron Blaise explains how he's able to paint dynamic creatures using traditional thinking in his digital art – and why you should do the same

Artist PROFILE
Aaron Blaise
COUNTRY: US

A graduate of Ringling College of Art and Design, Aaron worked as an animator for Walt Disney for 21 years. He was co-director of Brother Bear and nominated for an Oscar.
http://ifxm.ag/ablaise

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

During my early days at Disney, while working on films such as The Lion King, Mulan and Brother Bear, we would go through hundreds of variations of character designs. Because these films were hand drawn it wasn't too difficult to imagine how these rough designs would look in the finished film. However, after the advent of films such as Toy Story and other computer animated works, it became more difficult for many artists working traditionally to present characters as they might appear in the final film.

One of my greatest discoveries when I first started working digitally was that I now had the ability to create an image that looked like a frame of finished film. I was able to convey texture, mood and lightning – all in one image. This has great value when trying to present ideas to film executives, art directors and the rest of the crew. Being able to quickly show my concepts that appeared closer to the finished look of the film cut down the number of development iterations. This means there was less back and forth during the process, and therefore we saved money on the film's budget and increased our approval rate.

In this workshop I'll take you through my process and show you how I apply my background with traditional art mediums to creating digital characters that look like they're ready to step from the screen.

PRO SECRETS

Use layers
Don't be afraid to use as many layers as you want. You can always combine them later. Create new layers to experiment with lighting or compositional elements. This was a huge breakthrough for me when I realised I could just create a new layer and not ruin my piece! This thinking also evolved into the process I use now: rough drawing, refined drawing, local colour, shadows, direct light, reflected light, highlights, textures and texture highlights.

1 Tone document and rough sketch
I fill a document with a mid-tone grey, which enables me to judge my values (light and dark) more accurately. I create a new layer above the grey background and label it Rough Drawing. At this stage I draw loosely. Keeping it rough speeds things up and means I can try out new ideas without any restrictions. I explore proportions and spacing of features.

2 Refine the sketch
I reduce the Opacity of the rough to about 30 per cent and create a new layer labelled Refined Drawing. Now I find the details of the design – wrinkles or nose details, for example – that need defining. This stage is key, because the drawing will serve as the blueprint for the rest of the rendering process. Good draftsmanship is the first step to great paintings!
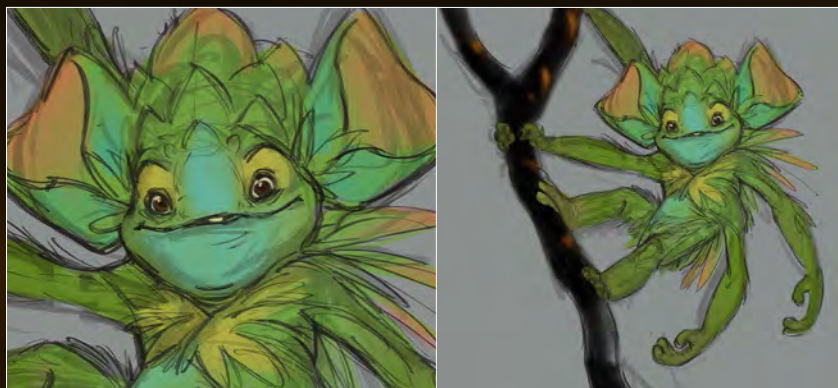
3 Bring in local colour

Local colour is the colour of an object without light or shadow. I create a layer under the drawing layers and call it Local Colour. For this stage I use a large, natural-looking brush. I start with green as my dominant colour and roughly lay it in. Next, I add other varying colours to create interest. This stage can still be loose and quick. It's good to experiment! This is the foundation of the colour work that will follow.

4 Create the first shadow layer

I create a new layer on top of everything, call it Shadows and set its Blend mode to Multiply. This enables the local colour to show through the shadow layer. With a cool mid-tone colour selected, I begin to lay in the shadows. To do this out of your head accurately you should be drawing from life as often as possible. I also stay loose and quick at this stage… but accurate.
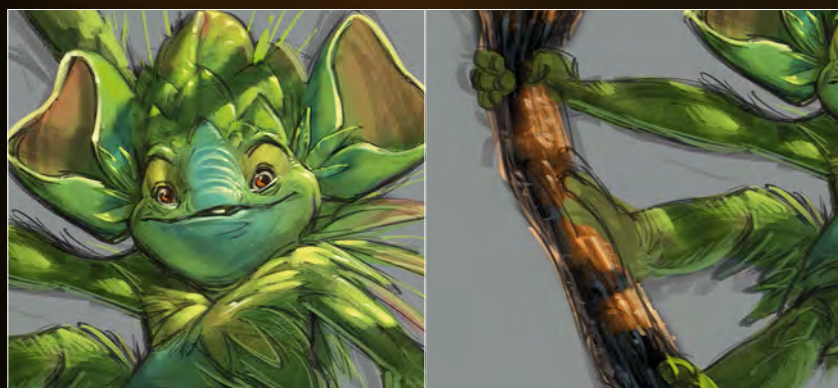
5 Paint direct light into the scene

Next, I create a new layer on top and name it Direct Light. It's important to remember colour temperature at this stage. I use a cool neutral colour for the shadows, but will be going warmer and more pure with the highlights. I begin to paint in the light areas where the multiple light sources fall on the character, using warm greens and yellows. The creature is starting to take shape.

6 Consider reflected light

Within the shadow areas, light will bounce from lit areas and produce reflected light. I create a layer under the direct light layer and name it Reflected Light, then select a colour that's a little warmer and brighter than the surrounding shadow colour. Subtlety is key: I want to only slightly adjust the values. I imagine the light source that's being reflected and model the form.

7 Make use of highlights

I create a new top layer and call it Highlights. It's time to shift back to the lit areas. (I jump from shadow to light and back again to keep everything balanced.) I select the Color Picker, grab some direct light colour and brighten the colour up significantly. Then I paint areas that require a bright highlight. I also start adding rim lighting and some deeper shadows.

8 An autumnal background

Next, I create a layer underneath all layers and name it Background. Using a natural brush I very quickly start laying in some autumnal colours to complement the greens of the creature. I treat it loose and abstract, and use darker values to ensure that the creature pops from the background. I then click Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur, and set the blur at 25 pixels.
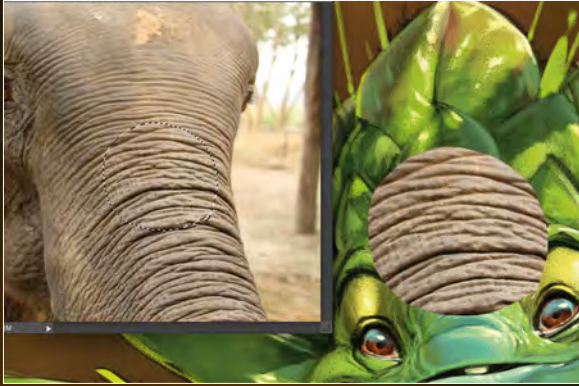
9 Introduce photo textures

Elephant textures make great creature skin. I select a section with the Lasso tool, drag it over to the illustration and reduce the Opacity to 30 per cent. Then I click Image>Adjustments>Exposure, increase the Gamma setting and adjust the Exposure to increase the contrast. I tweak these adjustments and the Opacity until the texture looks right.

10 Fit the texture to the creature

Next, I click Edit>Free Transform, resize the texture to fit and then select Edit>Transform>Warp. Now I can start to shape the texture to fit the creature's form. I then repeat steps eight and nine to create a mosaic of textures on the creature. I experiment with a variety of textures – here I've used both elephant and leaf textures.


11 Add highlights to textures

By the end of this stage the textures should feel like a part of the creature. I start by creating a layer on top and calling it Texture Highlights. Then I select a fine brush and start to highlight over the textures where the light falls. This should be done tastefully. A little goes a long way here.


12 Apply markings

Now I create a layer under the Texture Highlights layer and call it Markings. I set the layer's Blend mode to Multiply. Now using mid-tone greens and reds I go in and delicately add markings to the creature's skin. This stage adds interest and believability, and helps to describe the form of the creature.
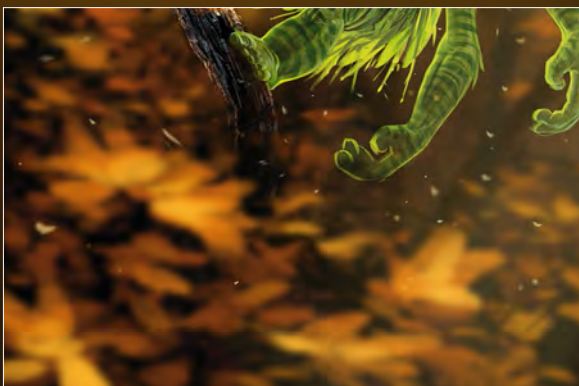
13 Depict foreground elements

I create a new layer on top and begin to loosely lay in foreground leaves and branches. Because this will be blurred there's no need to get detailed. However, I do build it up, using several layers. Once everything is laid in, I combine the layers and go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. Then I set the blur to about 35 pixels. This will give the piece a nice feeling of depth.
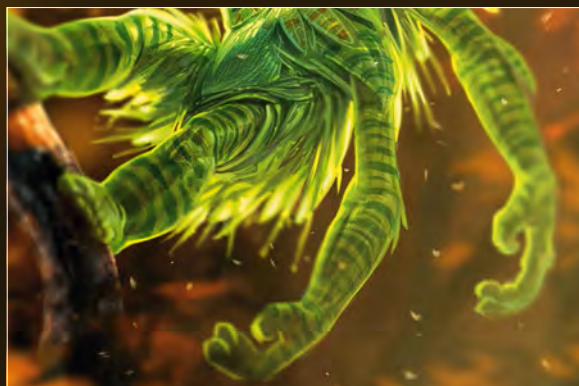
14 Depth of field and finishing up

I copy all of the creature layers and combine them into one leayer. Then I turn off all of the original individual layers. I select the Blur tool and pick the Airbrush setting. I set this to about 300 pixels and a strength of 50 per cent. Now I go in and begin to blur out areas of the creature layer that I want out of focus. I do this to divert the viewer's attention to areas of interest, such as the face. This also gives the image a bit of a photographic look. Finally, I flatten the image and adjust the exposure and saturation to get the composition nice and bright.

PRO SECRETS

Draw from life

One thing that'll help your digital work is to draw from life. This builds your mental library, and over time lighting and form will become second nature. Our imaginations are based in reality, so the bigger our reality base is in our minds then the better our imagined pieces will be.

SketchUp

APPLYING FINISHING TOUCHES IN 3D

Give your 3D models that all-important personal look by applying some last-minute polish, says **Mark Roosien**

CORE SKILLS *ImagineFX*

My previous core skills articles have explained the techniques you need to create a 3D model or scene in SketchUp (check out the free version of the program at **www.sketchup.com**). When a model is finished (is it ever?), SketchUp offers several features that enable you to present your work in your own customised visual style.

SketchUp provides you with a default background, featuring a blue sky and a green surface. Such a bland background enables you to focus on the task in hand: that of creating interesting 3D models. However, by using the Styles dialog you gain access to several style options, which can be applied as you see fit. To demonstrate this, I'll restyle one of my own models in three easy steps.

Artist
PROFILE
Mark Roosien
COUNTRY: Netherlands

Mark is a self-taught artist who jumped from traditional media to SketchUp seven years ago. He specialises in nuts 'n' bolts sci-fi art.
http://ifxm.ag/mroosien

CREATE YOUR OWN VISUAL STYLE
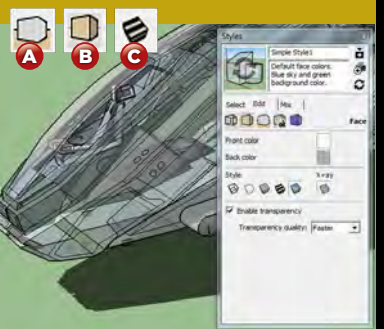
In this article, I use the Background Settings tool (A), the Face Settings tool (B) and the Display Shaded Using Textures tool (C), which are all part of the Styles dialog. As shown here though, these are only a few of the possible options. Explore the various icons and drop-down lists within the dialog to gain a proper impression of SketchUp's style options. If you want to, you can even show your model as an X-ray! To go back to the default settings, click the Select tab, click Default Styles in the drop-down list and then press Simple Style.
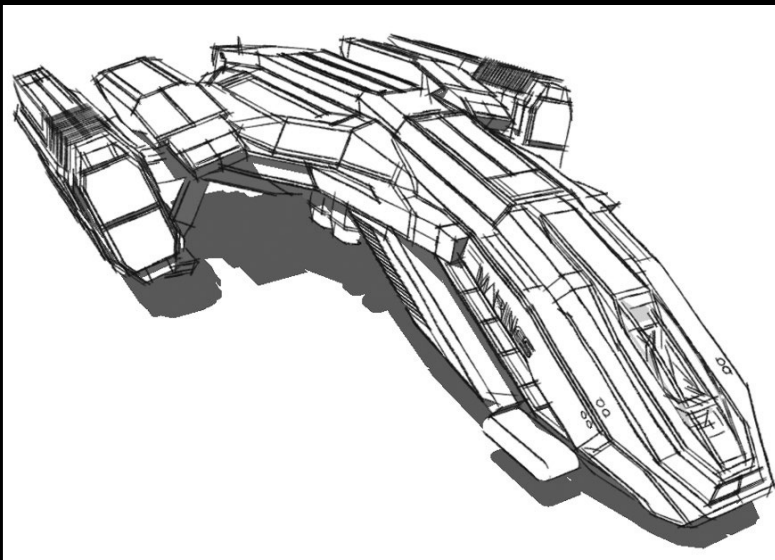
1 Get rid of that default background!

Click Window in the menu bar and then Styles. In the pop-up dialog you're presented with several options. To change the background, select Edit and then click the Background Settings tool. Remove the background colours by deselecting Sky and Ground or just change them by clicking the coloured squares. In this example, I select a white ground and sky.

2 Experiment with 'instant' styles

Style settings can be edited individually as shown, but you can also select instant styles from a drop-down list. In the dialog, click Select to reveal options from the drop-down list. For instance, to give your model a sketchy look, select Sketchy Edges and then Conte. Experiment to produce the result that best suits your art.

3 Refine your selected style.

I like the Conte style I selected, but I miss the model's original colours. To refine your visual presentation, just click Edit again and apply the finishing touches you desire. Click the Face Settings tool and then the Display Shaded Using Textures icon. The sketchy style remains, but the model also has its colours back.

Photoshop
MASTER LIGHT IN PHOTOSHOP

Olly Lawson takes you through his process for creating an atmospheric character illustration, with the emphasis on how light plays in the scene

Artist PROFILE

Olly Lawson
COUNTRY: England

Self-taught Olly is a freelancer working in London. Recent projects include illustrations for D&D and del Toro's The Strain, an upcoming Wii U game and teaching life-drawing at UAL.
www.ollylawson.co.uk

PRO SECRETS

Masking advice
Here are some extra layer mask features – it's always rewarding to experiment with shortcuts! When painting a layer mask for example, press backslash (\) to turn your mask into a Quick Mask, then tilde (~) to turn that into a black and white mask alpha layer. This can be useful if you want to see the mask alone, in order to then clean it up.

Light is at the heart of every picture, so it's in our best interests to try and understand it. Tame it to do your bidding and you're well on the way to creating a successful illustration.

I like to paint whatever's floating my boat, and having played a lot of chess lately I've decided to play with some of its more famous tropes to create something engaging. I'm very enthusiastic about the idea of outside interests affecting one's art. I feel the least inspired when sitting at my work desk, which can obviously lead to some problems. Taking walks, travelling, reading books and other 'distractions' like a game of chess all help to generate ideas for my pictures, and this workshop draws on all of these

I was sketching out ideas for what to paint for a workshop, when my good friend and illustrator Connor Adams suggested we play chess. Of course I gave into this distraction, but I realised mid-game that if I'm more interested in playing chess than painting, why not mix up these passions and use chess in the picture? Suddenly I realised plenty of scenes to paint, and commenced the illustration with a strong idea in mind.

I find my best pictures work out when I can first visualise the idea, especially when the idea is one that seems both original and challenging to me. How do you bring excitement to an idea of a girl playing chess?

1 First sketch
Although I like to start most of my pictures without lines, characters require me to use them to sketch anything efficiently. I find it important to visualise and then try to capture that initial expression, not caring too much about proportion, anatomy or realism. I can figure these out later, but the initial design is my top priority, and remains important until the end result.
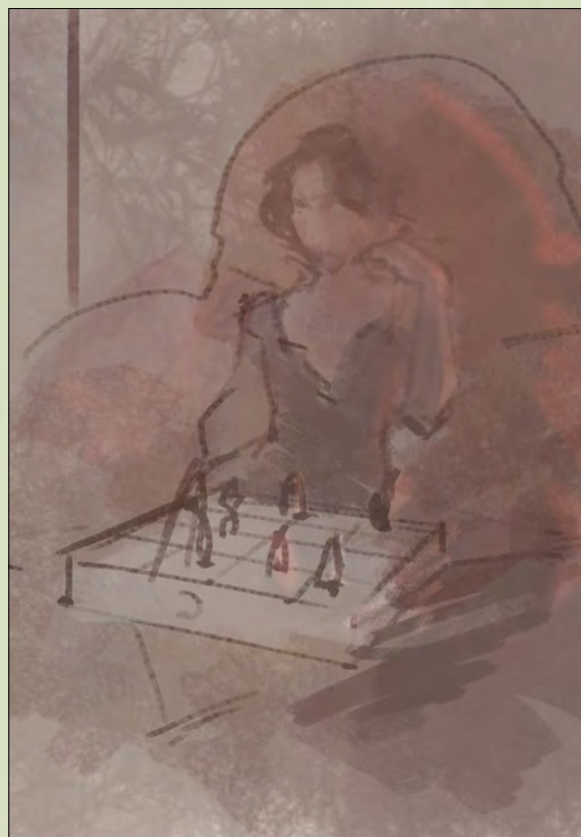
2 Dropping in colour
Just as lines may dictate forms, these early colour washes can influence every following stage of the picture. I don't use any kind of colour picking, but the Photoshop HUD overlay is vital for me to pick fresh colours with every stroke. I use different blending modes, such as Color Dodge here, to quickly drop in a dodged rim light.
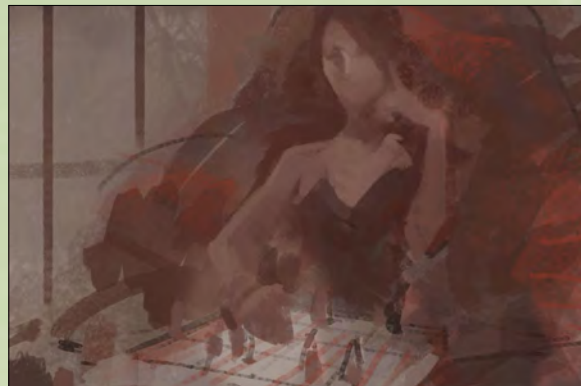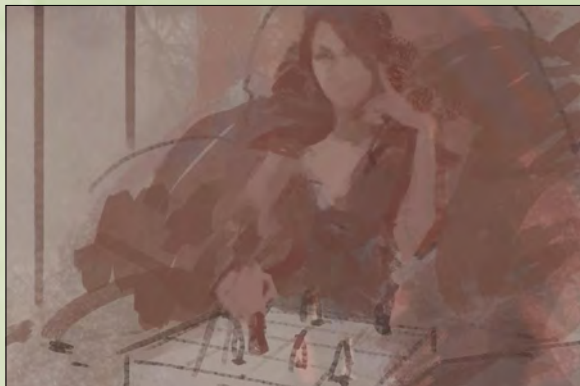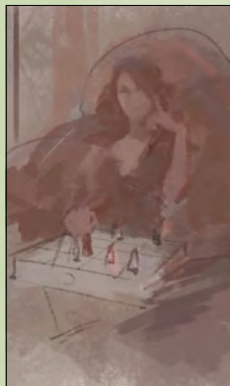
3 Developing the sketch

I believe that the first line is perfect. However, the second line that's added to an image can be flawed, because now you have potential accuracy problems. The more you add to your drawing, the harder it becomes to stay true to that vivid initial expression. So I try to be as accurate and considerate of these early marks, although expressive enough that it won't be a constrictive base to build the picture on.

4 Establishing early contrast

I stop drawing lines and use a brush tool to establish masses. I find this more efficient for sketching out and seeing if things that work in my head will work on th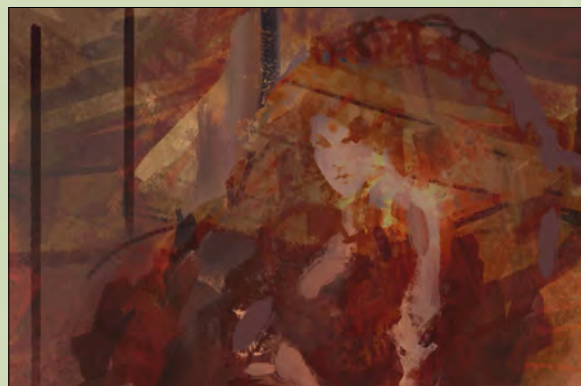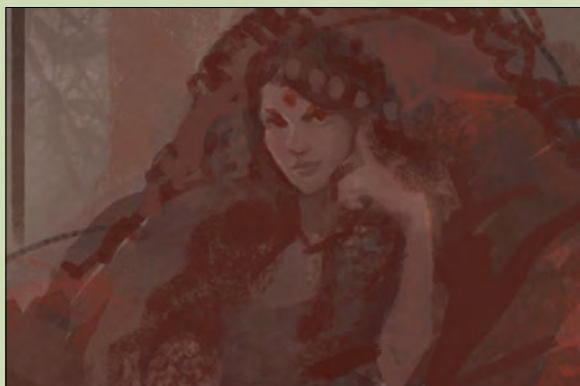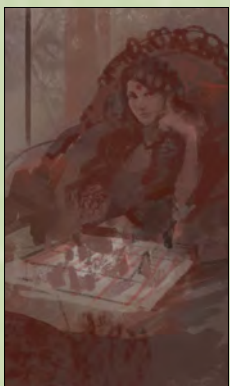e canvas. I establish contrasts that will be necessary for the final composition, knowing that my end result needs to focus on the chess board. Faces don't require spotlighting to draw the viewer's attention.

5 Refining the underpainting

I sketch in some texture and a face to further build up this picture. So far I'm just creating an underpainting. I decide to keep this warm, which enables me later to either subtly reveal cooler colours or pop them sharply, all the while keeping the overall gamut controlled toward warms. I start to think about – and purposefully destroy – some edges.

6 Intuitive texture work

Because I know this is the underpainting, I introduce some unexpected colours and textures. I use the Hard Light layer to introduce some hopefully serendipitous colours and mark-making. All of this is very intuitive, and is influenced by reference painting – usually from life. I feel like an area deserves a purple stroke and so I paint it in, and repeat around the canvas.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

STANDARD BRUSH: HARD ROUND BRUSH

Although I vary my brush usage constantly to solve new problems, I often return to a simple Hard Round brush.
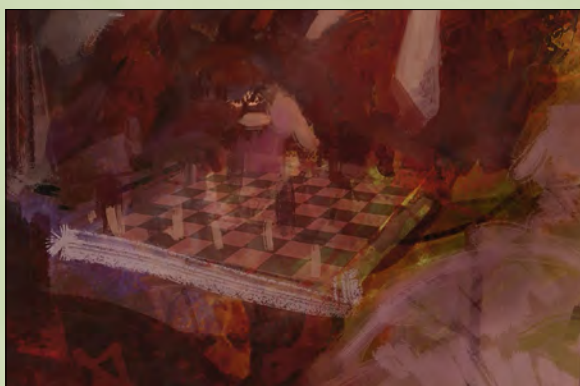
7 Refining the underpainting

The colour experimentation inspires me to create gold-decorated furniture with pink and purple cushions. A window adds light to the scene, and I stretch out a black-and-white chess board texture to help realise the perspective. This the last stage of the underpainting, so with a Luminosity layer I darken areas that I want to recede into unimportance.

8 Colour experimentation

I wonder if the underpainting is too traditional and derivative. Although I spend much of my time admiring the work of the Old Masters, I don't want to be limited to just copying those. I duplicate my layer, go crazy with the Curves, and see how far I can push it away from the sketch without losing the subject. It's interesting, but too far from my original idea to go with any further.

9 Returning from the experiment

I drop the experiment. Although I lost some time, because I pushed it so far I'm able to see by contrast that my painting will need a colour and design re-evaluation to 'pop' more. I often use a similar thinking, for example, adding an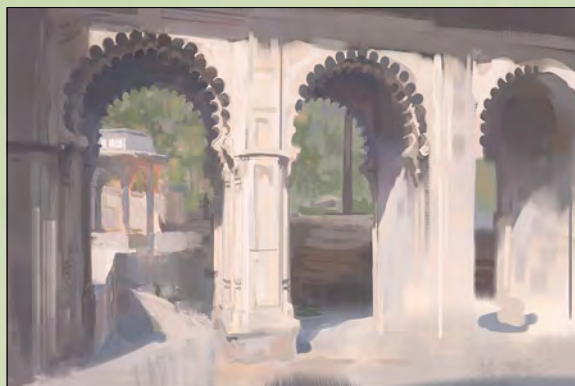 adjustment layer that boosts the contrast. Toggle this layer on and off, and from the contrast you may see that the original is far too dull.

10 Including a setting

This is a plein air painting I painted digitally during some travels in India last year. I feel this would make a great 'window' for my painting. It's always of benefit to have plenty of paintings stored away for underpainting textures or situations like this. I add a layer mask, some window parts and some adjustment layers to cool it and fit it into the image.

PRO SECRETS

No more distractions

I have a 'secret' technique of cropping away areas of the canvas to work on separately. I select sections of the canvas and put them into a new document to focus on just them, without any other distracting areas, often upscaling them to refine in detail. Sometimes I want to work on a boring area like pillows when a face can prove to be too distracting otherwise.
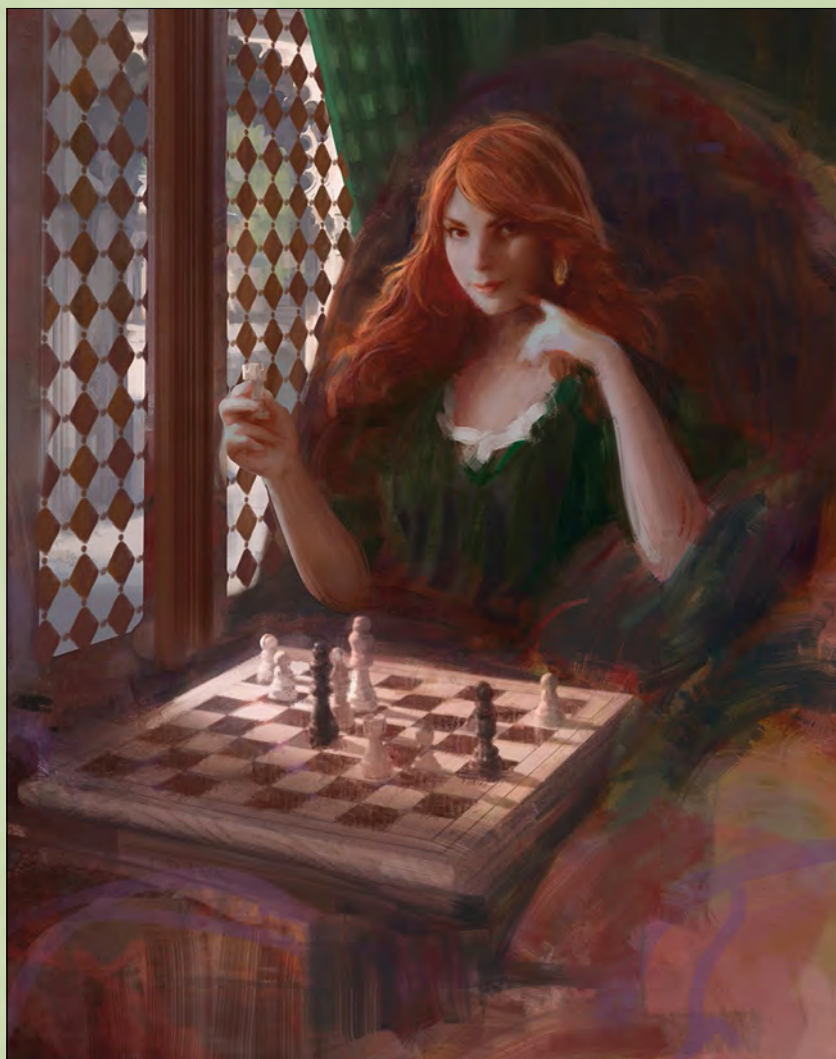
11 Developing the painting

I'm now happy with the underpainting, and start to develop the image as a finished piece. This involves stretching out the values and colours while staying close to the confines of the original underpainting, and developing each mass of colour without straying too far from the initial impression. The chess board is set up with the winning move of the game that inspired my painting in the first place.

12 Refining the painting

Realising some things don't work, such as the structure of the chair, walls and wherever her legs are meant to be, I adjust and move around portions to make more sense. I set the face back and redesign the clothes to have more interest, and darken the areas at the bottom. Black can be a great tool to create negative areas that the eye can move through without resting.

Shortcuts
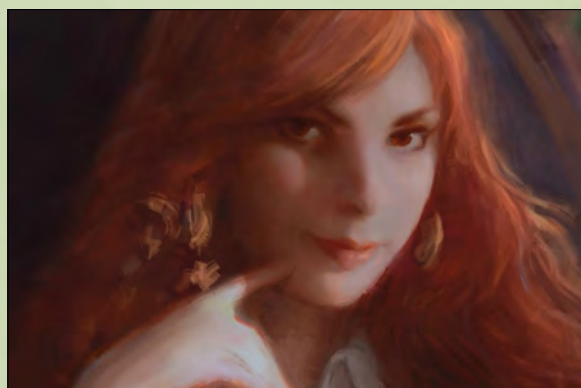**Fade stroke/ action**
Ctrl+Shift+F (PC)
Cmd+Shift+F (Mac)
Fades or changes the blending mode of your last stroke.
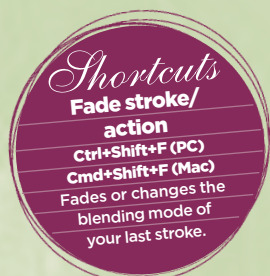
13 Painting the face

Our minds have special methods just for recognising faces, so we can easily spot a poorly constructed one. Place an eye two pixels too high and you can have an uncanny face. I try and keep the original expression. I use the Mixer brush tool for the hair, and a Smudge tool set to a textured Scatter brush at 99 per cent Opacity to blur messy areas without losing texture.
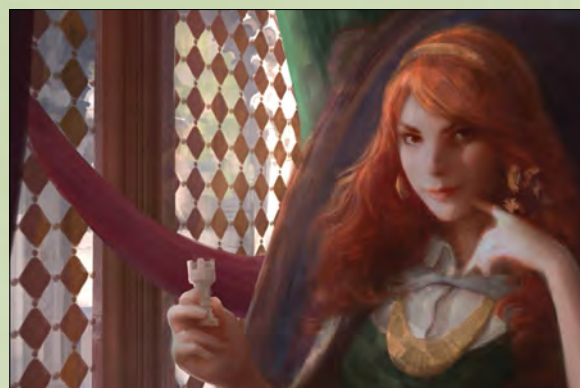
14 Final touches

I place the final layer of checkerboard light coming in through the window, use a lightly saturated Color Dodge layer and the Warp tool to stretch a diamond pattern over surfaces, and erase them into place using layer masks. I also add a final curtain across the window to highlight the rook as a point of high contrast, to show its importance within the story.

The colour of positivity
Colours are the most effective way to present emotions and feelings. The space station was originally mostly white, but then I decide to introduce a range of colours to it. It's an exaggerated approach that brings a rosy feeling to the image, and acts as a great boost to the whole piece.

Not so real
In reality the shadows would be very dark in space, because there aren't many objects to bounce the light off. But for bright colours that I want to use and for reasons of composition, I choose to ignore reality. This is artistic licence in action!

Photoshop

TURN AN IDEA INTO SCI-FI ART

Zezhou Chen recalls a melancholic maxim and visualises it as a retro sci-fi scene

Artist PROFILE

Zezhou Chen
COUNTRY: China

Zezhou is a concept artist and illustrator. He started working as a professional artist in 2008, and is currently available for freelance work assignments.
www.zezhouchen.com

The idea for this image and its title – S/MK 7.61 – came to me a long time ago. The title is the reverse of 16.7km/s, which is the third cosmic velocity: the minimum speed needed to escape the gravity of the sun and leave our solar system. It's a metaphor, you could say.

For myself there's another hidden meaning: leave my world, forget about me, go find a better place and a better future. And that's the original idea of the image. It actually had a very tragic feeling, and I didn't really want to touch it. So the concept was put aside until recently. I was about to paint something with a retro theme, as part of a project that I worked on with The SENSE, an artist group. That's when I recalled my old idea.

I decided to combine the original concept and the retro theme by simply replacing the design with the retro science fiction elements. This, in turn, resulted in the final image you see here. It features bright colours, which is a huge departure from my early ideas. And it's no longer a tragic scene. When I look at it, I feel a sense of hope.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

How I create...
A SCENE OF SCI-FI OPTIMISM

1 Weigh the composition

I weigh the composition not just by feeling, but rationally, too. At this stage, the primary goal is to arrange the areas of different colours and the edges between them, rather than to design the form of the object. This approach helps me to bring all the elements together in the image. Think of a skeleton and its relationship to the body.

2 Assemble the space station

I gradually paint in the space station, focusing on the design rather than how it's rendered. The whole station may look very complicated, but it's actually made up of many simple geometric forms. So an easy way to do this is to design it element by element, and then connect them – just as you would assemble modules in a real station.

3 Ignore ideas that upset the balance

New ideas keep coming out while I'm working. Some of them are interesting, like the puppy and the robot that I try to add to the image. But interesting doesn't mean better. In this case the puppy and the robot were too strong and attract too much attention. They upset the balance of the composition, so I leave them out.

Let it go

Random accidents are part of the creative process. Sometimes a random action may lead to a good result. The dark blue is what I expected in this area. But I produced this greenish colour by accident instead. And I love this accident. This little change brings this area to life.

Realistic fabric

Painting the fabric of the character's tights is quite a challenge. It is not just about the ripples and texture of the fabric itself – it also involves the anatomy. In many cases the body and the fabric influence each other. So it's necessary to make a careful study to make sure the result looks realistic.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: SQUARE TEXTURE

This can be used in most situations to give your art a traditional look.

GIVE YOUR 3D ART A UNIQUE LOOK

If your 3D fantasy designs look too clean, give them a 2D illustrative feel. **Pascal Blanché** reveals the ins and outs of his transformative art process

Artist PROFILE
Pascal Blanché
COUNTRY: Canada

Pascal studied at the Art School of Luminy, Marseille, before embarking on a longstanding career in the video games industry. He's currently at Ubisoft Montreal. He's also a freelance illustrator and has painted several book covers.
http://ifxm.ag/p-blanche

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

When it comes to 3D illustration, most of the time it's hard to address the inherently cold and clinical method of rendering an image or object. It's a 3D render, and it shows.

What I like to do is to trick the eye with some visual imperfections, which I introduce in a 2D painting program such as Photoshop. By taking a more graphical approach to my art I'm able to eliminate that alienating feeling of perfection that tends to push away the viewer.

Note that this concern is a personal one, but it means that I'm able to take my work into the strange waters that I like so much. It's here that I don't consider the end result to be a computer-generated artefact, but where you start to appreciate the subject for what it is: a mixture of different techniques. That consideration is something I always have in mind, even when I'm working in 3D. You can't get halfway through the process, add a few Photoshop filters and hope for the best.

So in this workshop I've broken down my approach to creating a hybrid piece of fantasy using a mix of 3D and 2D techniques. Feel free to adapt my process to your own way of working.
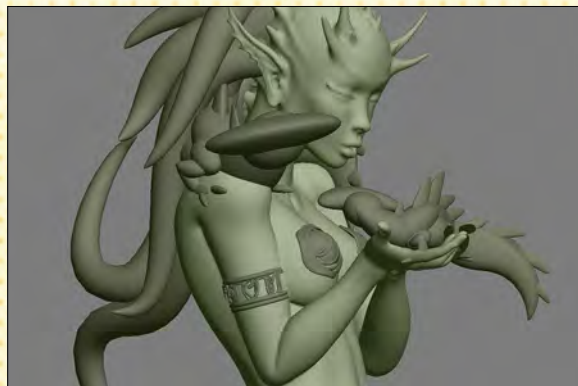
1 Pose the character
Composition, readability and silhouette are crucial, especially when it's a character piece. I avoid having too many elements that are mashed together or are over detailed. With a 3D tool like ZBrush it's tempting to spend hours noodling away. Instead, I focus on the bigger picture, and try to capture an emotion, a movement or an instant featuring key elements.
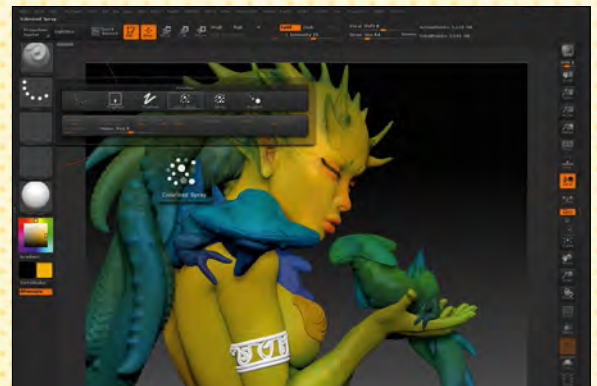
2 Texturing the figure's tones
After creating details and UV Maps in 3ds Max, I start texturing. I select a Spray brush in ZBrush to produce an uneven colour base, introducing hue and value variations. I also create some gradient tones to give to my key colours greater focus. For instance, I give my dragon girl yellow skin, with gradients of light green developing into desaturated blues at the tips of her horns.
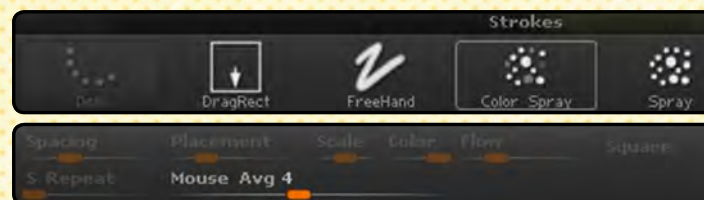
3 Achieve the right camera angle
With my pose finalised I now adjust my camera. Anticipating the illustrative look of my final work, I look for a strong silhouette. I want to avoid cluttering up the composition with unnecessary elements and confusing angles. I decide to maintain the focus on the lizard-like creature, but also remember to show key aspects of the girl, such as her face. ➔➔

4 Keep your lighting scheme simple

There's only one rule when it comes to 2D illustrations, and that's to keep it simple. Actually, this is more difficult than you might think, because there's always the temptation to add a few lights here and there to complement the details. Most of the time one key light placed either top right or left, and a fill light on its opposite side does the trick. Make sure that shadows aren't casting over either the face or key elements of your model. Now you're ready to render!

5 Creating a classic vibe

I import the image into Photoshop at a size of 4K – the bigger the better, especially if you plan on submitting your work for print reproduction. Geometrical shapes and complementary colours help to focus the eye on the centre of the image. I use a light yellow background and an orange circle, which creates a nice graphical touch that gives the illustration a classic vibe.

6 Reworking key colours

Using my depth mask I select the front of my subject and copy the selection on to a new layer. I can now change the colour of the back of the characters using the Hue & Saturation tool in Colorize mode. This enables me to blend some of the less-important elements, while giving more depth and saturation to the picture.

7 Adjusting the light

At the moment the tones are equal throughout the image, and there's still not enough focus on the centre of my illustration. To fix this, I create a simple black and white gradient, using the silhouette alpha as a mask to radically darken the bottom of my character. It immediately creates a more illustrative look.

8 Shadow colouring

Using the Color Range selection I pick up the dark tones, and set the Fuzziness to 150 to capture a better gradient effect. I then copy and paste the selection on another layer, then colour correct it with the Hue & Saturation tool in Colorize mode. I choose cold tones such as blue and greens to colour my shadows. I set this layer to Color Transparency to avoid tone conflicts.

9 Dry brush and other filters

Now I start to add some 2D effects to knock back the appearance of the 3D render. The Dry Brush filter with Brush size 2 or 3, Details set to the max and Texture set to 1 is perfect for this. I play around with different effects filters, such as paint daubs, drybrush and cutout, and always work on layer copies, in case something doesn't go according to plan.

10 Fading out layer effects

After applying a layer effect, some details may be lost. This is when multiple layers come in handy. With your layer still active below, use a wide, smooth and low-opacity Erase brush to remove some of the layer effects. Then duplicate both the original and faded effects, and merge them to create a new "ground layer" that you can duplicate to work on new effects.

11 Adding dark lines

Another set of Photoshop effects I use are those that create dark strokes. I select the Poster Edges filter, adjust the Thickness and Intensity, then either set Posterization to 6 or the Accented Edges effect with Edge brightness set to 20 or less. Then I work on this new layer with the Eraser brush to keep the dark lines in the areas I need.

12 Deformation and Liquify

I now have one layer stack of the character featuring all the effects, and the background on another layer. Before collapsing them both I duplicate the figure and then apply Transform/Distort or Warp to exaggerate some of her proportions, add a bit of an angle to make the image more dynamic and use Liquify to adjust some micro details. I rework some of her proportions, and boost the tail's curves and the size of the horns.

13 Add weathering textures

I use some high-res photo textures of weathered paper to further blend the subject and the background together. Those textures can be added in Screen or Multiply mode. I also used a colour half-tone effect on a duplicate layer of the image to give it a printed look. I reduce the effect here and there, and apply it in Multiply mode with Opacity set to 30 per cent.
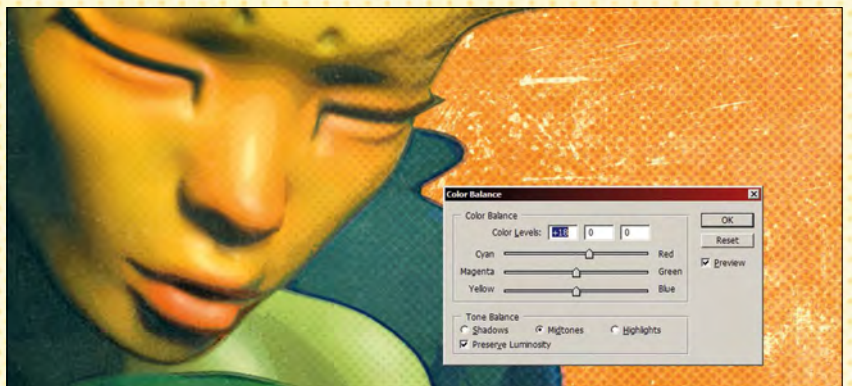
14 Final colour touch-up

Once I'm happy with the end result, I always go back for a final recolour pass, just to check if I can achieve a better-looking image. I try to bring back a more balanced palette, simply by slightly exaggerating the colour balance: more blue/greens in the shadows, more reds in the mid-tones and yellows highlights. It's really a question of personal taste. I hope you found this workshop helpful. Get in touch if you want to talk about some technical aspects or share your own art!

Stanley Lau, aka Artgerm, reveals his razor-sharp digital art secrets!

© Marvel

Photoshop
CREATE BETTER THUMBNAILS

Matt Tkocz shares his thumbnailing process, which enables him to generate a vast amount of concepts

Artist PROFILE

Matt Tkocz
COUNTRY: US

Matt was born in Poland, but raised in Germany and he moved to California to study Entertainment Design at Art Center College of Design, in 2008. He graduated in 2012 and now works in the entertainment industry.
www.mattmatters.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

For this workshop I'm going to go over my entire design process, from sketching rough thumbnails to rendering a full-colour image. I'll also be discussing my thought process and approach to sketching, perspective, the use of references, and design in general.

The techniques and tools that I use for this process are extremely basic. For the thumbnail portion of the workshop, you don't even need a computer! The angle and perspective for the sketches will be as primitive as humanly possible. There won't even be any variation in the line weight of the sketches. Removing all the flashy gimmicks allows for a far more fluid workflow. Rather than putting an emphasis on creating pretty illustrations, I'll be primarily focusing on efficiently generating a large variety of ideas, just as I would do in a professional environment.

At the end of this stage, I'm going to collage my favourite elements from all the thumbnails into one design, which I'll then take to a full-colour render.
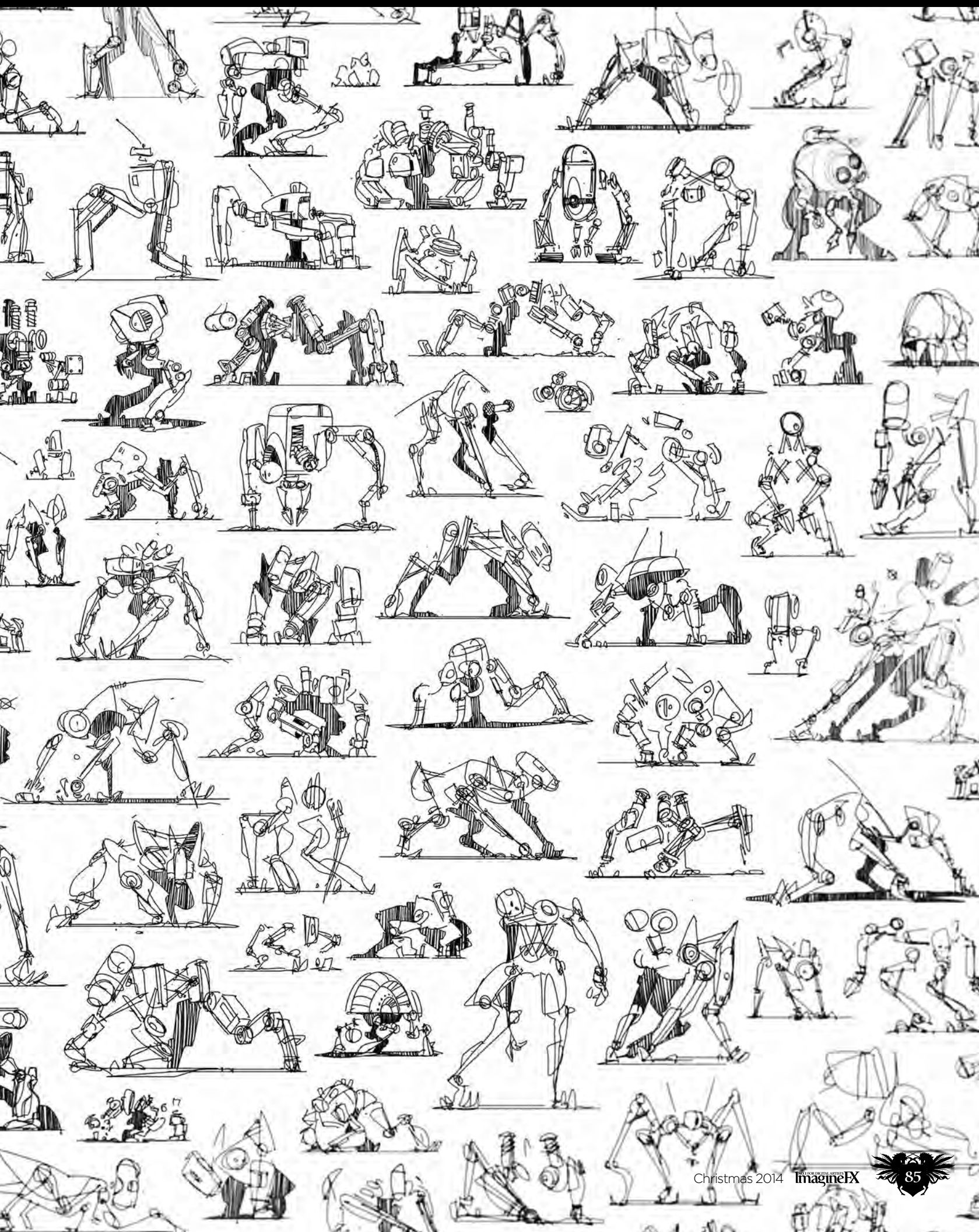
1 Interpret the client's brief

The brief is to come up with some sort of a mechanical creature. This is a very loose description that leaves a lot of room to interpretation. The challenge for this design will be to create a relatable creature that relies on the characteristics of existing animals, but not be literal to the point where the design reads as a caricature. At the end of the day, I want it to feel like a man-made machine.

© iStockphoto.com
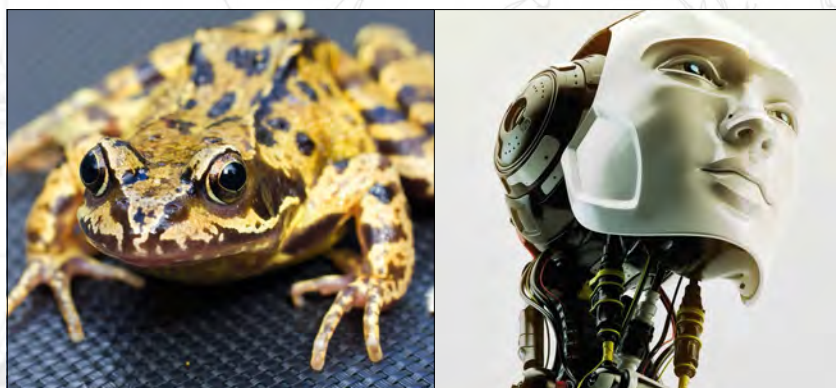
2 Gather reference material

Reference is a key part of my design process, from the first doodle to the final rendering. Because this concept is essentially a creature-inspired robot, I gather two types of reference material. I study animals for proportion, gesture and stance, and look at hydraulics and robotics to understand how all the mechanical pieces could fit together. I'm not an engineer by any stretch of the imagination, so my goal is to make the functionality of my design look just believable enough to convince most of my target audience.
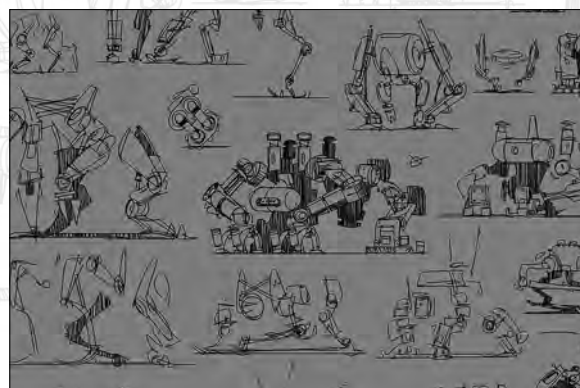
3 Drawing technique

I generate my thumbnails as line drawings, which enables me to be more efficient and unrestricted. However, when I hit a wall, I resort to experimental art techniques such as photo bashing, 3D modelling or using Photoshop custom brushes. Doing my sketching in Photoshop gives me some extra flexibility that I wouldn't have on paper. It's the best of both worlds.
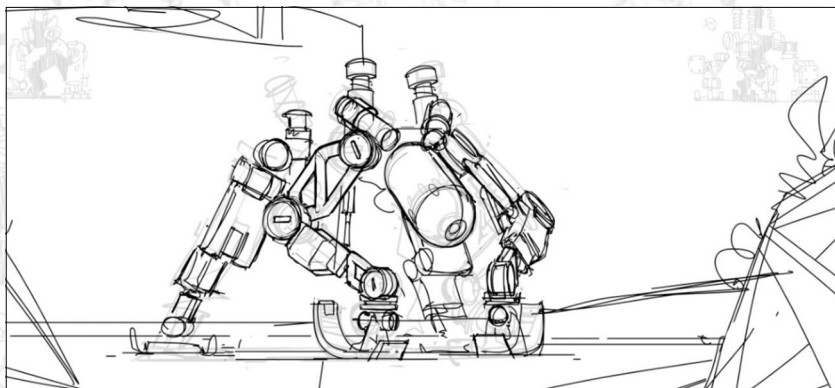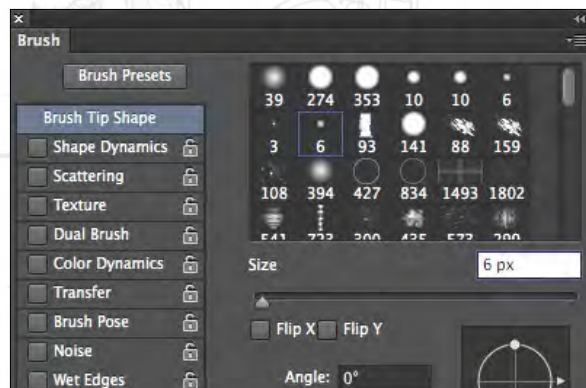
4 The advantages of a simple brush

At this stage I prefer to move fast and cover as much ground as possible. Disabling Pressure Sensitivity on my Photoshop brush significantly reduces my ability to create well-rendered drawings, because I'm forced to move from one thumbnail to the next at a quicker pace. I use a standard, Round 6px Photoshop brush, and turn off all its fancy features.

5 Perspective choices

I stay away from proper perspective drawing for now. Instead, I stick to simple isometric side or three-quarters views for three reasons. First, drawing in perspective is hard and I don't feel like it! Second, seeing all the designs in the same perspective makes it easier to compare them. Third, because all the sketches share the same angle and lens, it's easy to quickly mix and match individual body parts: put one mech's head on another mech's body, take one mech's arms and put them on another one… that sort of thing.

Shortcuts
Liquify
Ctrl+Shift+X (PC)
Cmd+Shift+X (Mac)
Opens the Liquify window where you can warp your art and tweak the proportions.
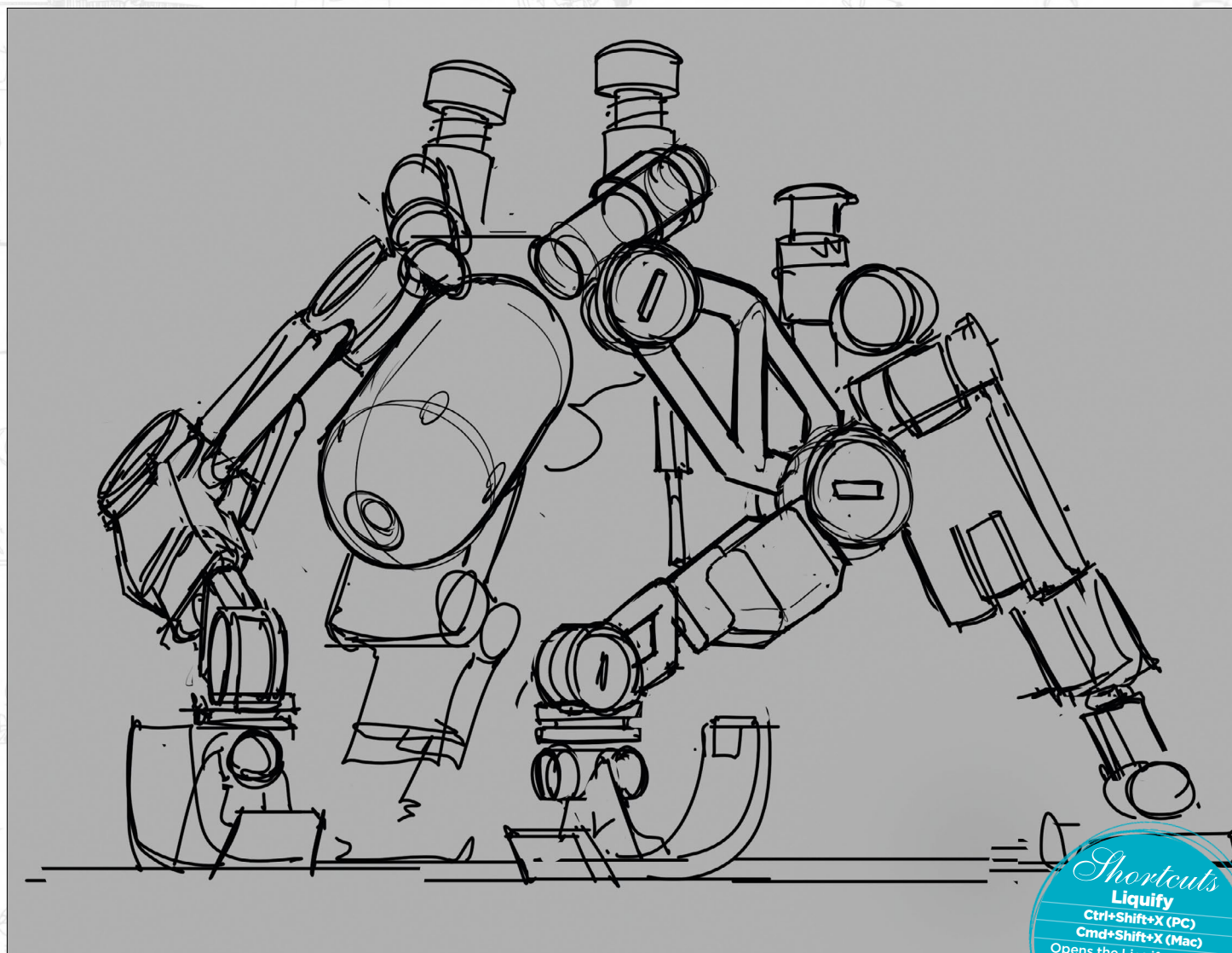
6 Quality vs quantity of sketched ideas

I care about the quantity of ideas at this point. I believe in the notion that your first idea is never the best one: I usually produce dozens of thumbnails before all those clichéd ideas are out of my system. The actual exploration of worthy, original concepts usually doesn't begin until you're sick of sketching. That's when you move out of your comfort zone and can hopefully surprise yourself. ➥

8 Varying my approaches

I tackle some of the thumbnails as gesture studies: longer, bolder lines to capture the attitude of the mechs. However, as I became more familiar with different poses, I depict details such as feet, grippers and heads. It doesn't matter how you approach a thumbnail if you keep silhouette, proportion and stance in mind.

7 Pace yourself and evaluate your work

As much as I like moving forwards quickly, I try to pace myself and not rush the process. I remind myself that the goal is not to cover a page with ink. Each thumbnail should serve the purpose of bringing you closer to your final design. It should not just be a sketch for the sake of sketching. I make a conscious effort to slow down while drawing or painting, to force myself to think more and be mentally present. Getting into 'the zone' is a problematic thing in my experience. It stops you from evaluating what you're doing.

PRO SECRETS

Explore image resolutions

To save time when saving out my images at different resolutions and formats, I set up a few Actions in Photoshop. Click the Record button in the Action dialog and Photoshop will record everything you do. For example, you can resize your image, merge layers and apply filters. Then stop the recording and assign a keyboard shortcut to this Action. I use three Actions to export my images at different resolutions.

9 Mix and match elements

Once I've generated a range of thumbnails, I pick my favourites and experiment with them. I replace certain elements such as legs or heads, and use Photoshop's Transformation tools to make sure that there isn't any room for improvement. After I 'Frankenstein' together the perfect mech, I take it to the next level.

10 Translation of the original idea

I often struggle with taking a thumbnail and translating it into a full-colour render, while retaining whatever made me like the sketch in the first place. A certain level of disconnect between the thumbnail and the final art is unavoidable. The trick is to maintain as much of the sexiness of the initial sketch as possible, while creating a well-thought-out render. Don't be a slave to the thumbnail, because it can almost certainly be improved. But find out what made you fall in love with it, and then try to keep that aspect in your final image.

Shortcuts
Merge visable layers
Ctrl+Shift+E (PC)
Cmd+Shift+E (Mac)
instantly collapse all visible layers down to just one.

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

8 PRODUCTS ON TEST

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE

92 Intuos Creative Stylus 2
Discover how Wacom has created a decent stylus for the iPad with extra pressure sensitivity.

93 Charcoal
Transform your everyday photos into eye-catching charcoal sketches with this app and Photoshop plug-in.

93 Project Dogwaffle Howler 9.5
Concept artists will find plenty of interest in the latest version of the painting and animation app.

94 Bamboo Stylus fineline
Churn out sketches and take notes with Wacom's well-made, versatile and stylish tool.

TRAINING

95 Performance and Acting: Creating Believable Characters
In-Ah Roediger's excellent guide to developing characters in Maya will be of use to both 3D and 2D artists.

BOOKS

96 New reads
The Art of John Alvin; The Art of Jim Burns: Hyperluminal; Graphic L.A.

RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious

The CS2 will soon be supported by Procreate, Adobe Sketch and Adobe Line, among several other art apps.

The CS2's precision tip is smaller, harder and more accurate than the previous model.
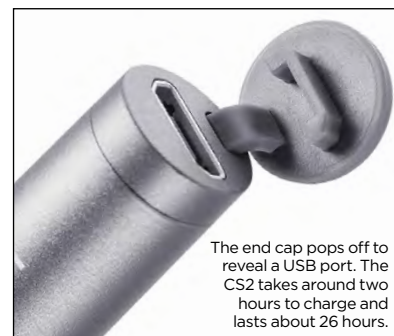
The end cap pops off to reveal a USB port. The CS2 takes around two hours to charge and lasts about 26 hours.

Intuos Creative Stylus 2

TIP TOP If you're after a precision stylus for your iPad that feels like one you'd use on your Intuos tablet, then look no further

iPad

Price £65 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.com/en/gb **Contact** 020 7744 0831

The Wacom Intuos Creative Stylus 2 is aimed squarely at artists requiring a precision tool for sketching and painting on their iPad. Like many styli that are appearing on the market, the CS2 is an active stylus, meaning it's paired to your iPad via Bluetooth technology.

The advantage that an active stylus has over a passive stylus (which is one without Bluetooth connectivity that simply emulates your finger with a rubber tip) is that you can customise and use extra buttons – for toggling between tools, undoing actions and so on. This stylus also supports palm rejection and pressure sensitivity (it boasts 2,048 pressure levels). The first advantage is nice, but the latter two features are vital for artists.

The CS2 doesn't disappoint when drawing. You can genuinely sense the extra levels of pressure sensitivity in apps such as SketchBook. Everything

The Creative Stylus 2 feels great in the hand, and it has a soft-touch grip that flares out towards the end of the device.

feels much more natural, especially with lighter strokes and when building up layers of colour or tone.

On opening the CS2 box, you're quickly made aware that this is one of Wacom's premium products. The stylish moulded plastic and rubber case that holds the stylus and USB charging cable is a lovely object in itself.

> ❝ On opening the box you're made aware that this is a premium product ❞

Also included in the case is a spare tip and a built-in device to remove the tip from your stylus. It's a lovely package to open and when you do so, you find a stylus that feels like the one you use on your desktop machine.

While the CS2 lacks the aesthetic appeal of, say, Pencil by 53 and Adobe's Ink, it'll feel very familiar to

artists who use this kind of tool daily. And not only in looks. The smaller, harder nib feels like you're drawing on a surface rather than gliding along with a small blob of rubber.

Setting up the stylus is a cinch. Simply pop the rubber cap on the pen and plug in the supplied Micro USB lead to charge it up (it takes around two hours to reach full charge). Then open up your iPad's Settings app, flick on Bluetooth and turn off Multitasking Gestures.

The latter makes sure palm rejection works in the way it should when you're drawing. The CS2 will soon be supported by numerous apps including Procreate, Adobe Sketch and Adobe Line. But as we write only a handful are supported, with ArtRage, SketchBook and Bamboo Paper being the most popular and useful.

If you're new to active styli, the Creative stylus 2 is definitely worth a look. Although only a few apps currently support its button shortcut functionality, pressure sensitivity and palm rejection (and some only support one or two of these functions), it's a fantastic – and super-comfortable – tool for both quick sketching and longer painting sessions.

DETAILS

Features
■ 2,048 pressure levels (app-dependent)
■ Palm rejection (app-dependent)
■ Customisable buttons (app-dependent)
■ Ergonomic, familiar Intuos design
■ Precision tip
■ Supplied case
■ Hidden USB port
■ Supplied Micro USB charging cable
■ Spare tip included

System Requirements
iPad: iPad 3, iPad Mini, iPad Air or later

Rating
★★★★☆

Charcoal

Getting the right settings can prove challenging, but luckily the presets are pretty good.

OVER DRAWN? Turn your photos into realistic charcoal sketches

Price £30 (home licence), £54 (business licence)
Company AKVIS
Web www.akvis.com

RATING

Charcoal turns your photos into realistic charcoal drawings. Using a series of sliders in a familiar interface, you import a photo and tweak settings until you're happy. It's not going to help your drawing skills, but you can quickly create a 'sketch', or even use it as a quick way of concepting ideas when drawing a number of characters isn't feasible. The tool can be bought as a standalone app or as a Photoshop plug-in (which works in compatible photo editors).

It takes some practice to achieve decent results. Getting the right amount of detail proves challenging, but choosing the right photograph from (preferably high-contrast) helps. The extensive lists of presets along with the large preview window give you a great idea of what your sketch will look like, and a live preview gives immediate feedback. When happy, hit the Run button and you get a nifty sequence in the Timeline panel (Business licence only) enabling you to flick between different stages.

Charcoal isn't essential, but it's a decent tool for generating realistic charcoal sketches quickly.

In the Business edition, you can pick any intermediate stage of the drawing.

Project Dogwaffle Howler 9.5

PC ONLY

WAFFLY VERSATILE The latest version of the painting and animation app has some very neat features

Price £55   **Company** TheBest3D   **Web** www.thebest3d.com   **Contact** dogwaffle@thebest3d.com

There are so many inexpensive options for digital painters nowadays that choosing a piece of software can be a hard task. One application that stands out though – and not just because of its bizarre name – is Project Dogwaffle Howler. The brainchild of artist and developer Dan Ritchie, PD has grown to become a tool aimed at those creating art for the visual effects industry. And it has some great features.

Of course, there are the standard natural media tools here, with a raft of brushes on offer (just hitting the Browse Media button gives you an idea of the scope of the brushes available) and the ability to create your own from your artwork. Undoubtedly great options, but that's pretty standard, familiar stuff really.

PD is also an animation tool, with useful tools such as a Timeline and Exposure Sheet, and the ability to load up video files and frame sequences. There are also some excellent – and rather fun tools – such as the Foliage brushes that enable you to quickly and interactively paint trees and bushes from presets (there are new presets in version 9.5 as well).

Where PD stands apart from its budget rivals is in the rather interesting 3D functionality. The 3D designer filter makes it possible to quickly create 3D models based on your sketches (which works very well for terrain), while a new, rather accomplished Particle Modeler brings a 3D-like interface to the application, enabling you to create some very cool particle effects with little brush effort (think clouds and the like).

The fact that PD Howler is constantly being developed and updated is exciting. And with every new release Dan Ritchie seems to bring something cool to the mix. Version 9.5 brings numerous tweaks and updates to PD's already extensive toolset, while adding some cool new effect-generation features. The interface and some of the workflow may feel a little unfamiliar if you're used to Photoshop clones. But otherwise there's no doubting that PD Howler is an excellent and highly original art-creation application.

DETAILS

Features
■ Natural media toolset
■ Particle brushes including foliage brushes
■ 3D designer tool with new lighting and shadow features
■ Particle Modeler
■ Animation including Exposure Sheet and Onion Skinning tools
■ Customisable interface
■ Layers and selection tools
■ Huge amount of brushes
■ Customisable brushes
■ Photo-editing tools

System Requirements
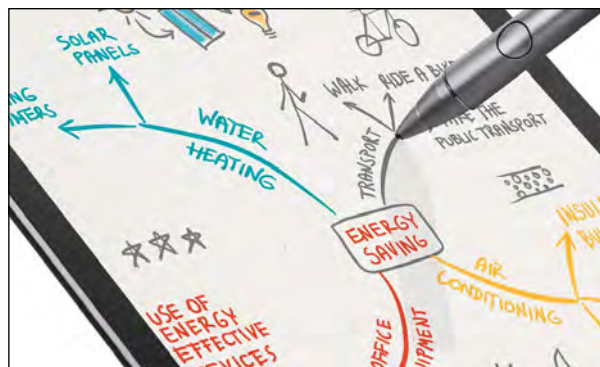**PC:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8, 100MB hard drive space, 4GB RAM

Rating

The Foliage tool in Project Dogwaffle Howler 9.5 is excellent, enabling you to generate realistic trees and bushes in no time at all.

For an active stylus the fineline is pretty slim and is comfortable to use over long periods of sketching.

The all-metal body of the Bamboo Stylus fineline looks and feels great. It even comes with a lid (although you don't need it!).

Bamboo Stylus fineline iPad

FINE LINES Wacom's latest stylus proves to be a well-made, versatile and stylish tool for sketching and note-taking

Price £50 | **Company** Wacom | **Web** www.wacom.com/en/gb | **Contact** 020 7744 0831

Like Wacom's Intuos Creative Stylus 2, its Bamboo Stylus fineline is an active stylus that will connect to your iPad 3, iPad Mini or iPad Air, via Bluetooth. However, the fineline is a very different product

For a start, it feels more like a pen than an artistic tool. The Creative Stylus is clearly a tablet accessory, whereas this model feels like a good-quality pen such as a Staedtler.

> ## 66 If you want a versatile pen for sketching, the fineline is well-constructed and extremely nice to use 99

The concave, customisable button is a neat design touch and helps prevent accidental presses.

Furthermore, whereas the Creative Stylus 2 has two customisable buttons that are app-dependent, the fineline has a single, discreet button. Going further with the aesthetics, the fineline has an all-metal, slim-ish body and even comes with a lid. There's also a cap that hides the USB port.

The Bamboo Stylus fineline feels solid and the slightly concave button is a nice touch, preventing accidental presses. There's also, like the Creative Stylus 2, a small blue LED on the pen that shows when the pen is charging (red) and when it's pairing/paired to your iPad (flashing/solid blue).

So what's it like to use? Well, at time of publication there are very few apps that support the stylus, so it's hard to be complete in our opinion. But it works very well with Bamboo Paper, as you'd expect, and even (like the Creative Stylus 2) unlocks a special pack of papers and pens when paired with the app. ArtRage is another program that's supported, but only with pressure-sensitivity and not customisable buttons or palm-rejection. Adobe's apps and the likes of Procreate may be updated to take advantage of the stylus by the time you read this, but because they weren't supported at the time of writing, we couldn't pair the pen with them.

The Bamboo Stylus fineline has 1,024 levels of pressure, with a similar-in-feel, yet finer nib than the Creative Stylus 2. For most, the 1,024 levels of pressure will be enough, but as we've said in our Creative Stylus 2 review, you can notice the difference with the 2,048 levels in the Creative Stylus 2.

We do love the feel of the nib in the fineline and it feels great when working on the iPad, whether you're sketching or simply annotating, taking notes or concepting. If you're after an all-out art tool we'd probably recommend the £65 Creative Stylus 2 over the fineline because of its three customisable buttons and 2,048 levels of pressure.

But if your budget is slightly less and you want a versatile pen for sketching and note-taking, the Bamboo Stylus fineline is well-constructed and extremely nice to use. We're just waiting on the apps to update so we can use it to its full potential.

DETAILS

Features
- Active stylus
- Fine, precision tip
- 1,024 levels of pressure (app-dependent)
- Palm rejection (app-dependent)
- Customisable, concave button (app-dependent)
- All-metal body
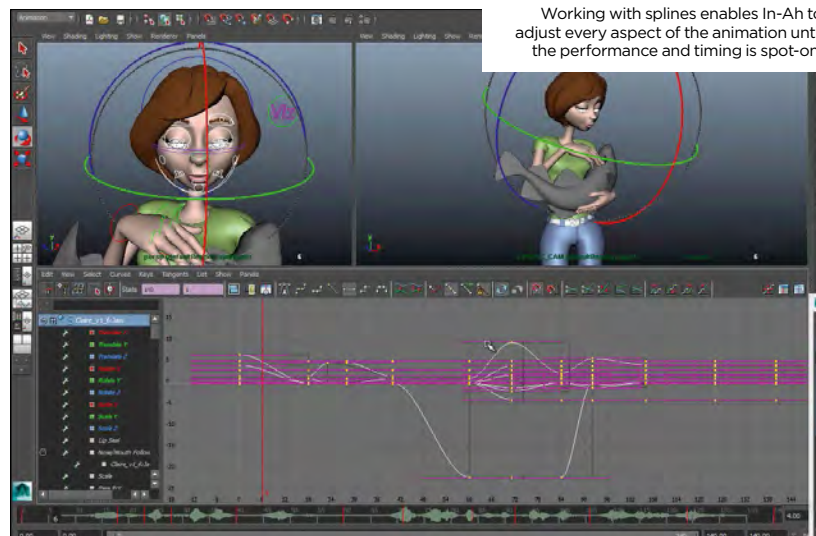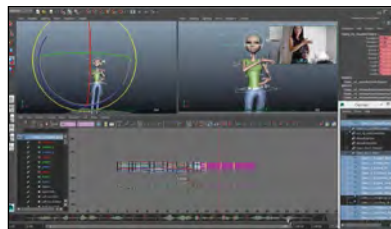- Supplied Micro USB cable
- Includes a lid

System Requirements
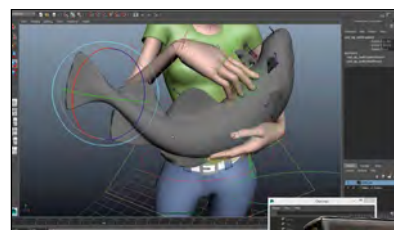iPad: iPad 3, iPad Mini, iPad Air or later

Rating

In-Ah begins her tutorial by acting out how the character might behave, building a library of reference to show how she moves and talks.

Working with splines enables In-Ah to adjust every aspect of the animation until the performance and timing is spot-on.

Performance and Acting: Creating Believable Characters

SWEAT THE DETAILS Animator and concept artist In-Ah Roediger helps you get under the skin of your character in her Maya masterclass

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** $49 **Format** DVD/download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

The PR problems for computer-generated animation come from its name. Many people assume the computers do most of the work, but in fact CG animation remains a painstaking field. In-Ah Roediger's video shows the skill that's demanded of pro animators, as she depicts a character acting out a passage of pre-recorded audio.

In-Ah starts by gathering her reference – or rather, creating it. She listens over and over to the audio loop, first getting a feel for her character, then acting out the character's movements. She also makes several passes at lip-syncing the speech from several camera angles. The understanding of your character you gain through doing this is useful for all artists, not just animators.

Then it's into Maya, the queen of animation software, to work with the character model. Don't expect a beginner-friendly run-through of

Maya's animation tools: barely anything is explained, and the character In-Ah uses is already modelled, textured and rigged. In-Ah's focus is the detail of character animation. She's operating on the level you aspire to once you've mastered the basics and can assemble a walk cycle.

You'll see In-Ah follow a standard procedure of blocking out the big movements, before refining and refining again. One extended passage, for example, focuses on correctly pacing eye blinks and the movement of the eyeball beneath the eyelid. Together, these tiny details establish a character you believe is real and has her own personality.

Performance and Acting is gold dust for animators – it's full of clever tricks and techniques. And even if you're not an animator, In-Ah will inspire you to take the time to understand your characters, and show the dedication that goes into crafting every second of big-screen animation.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Filming reference
- Blocking out
- Working with splines
- Breakdowns
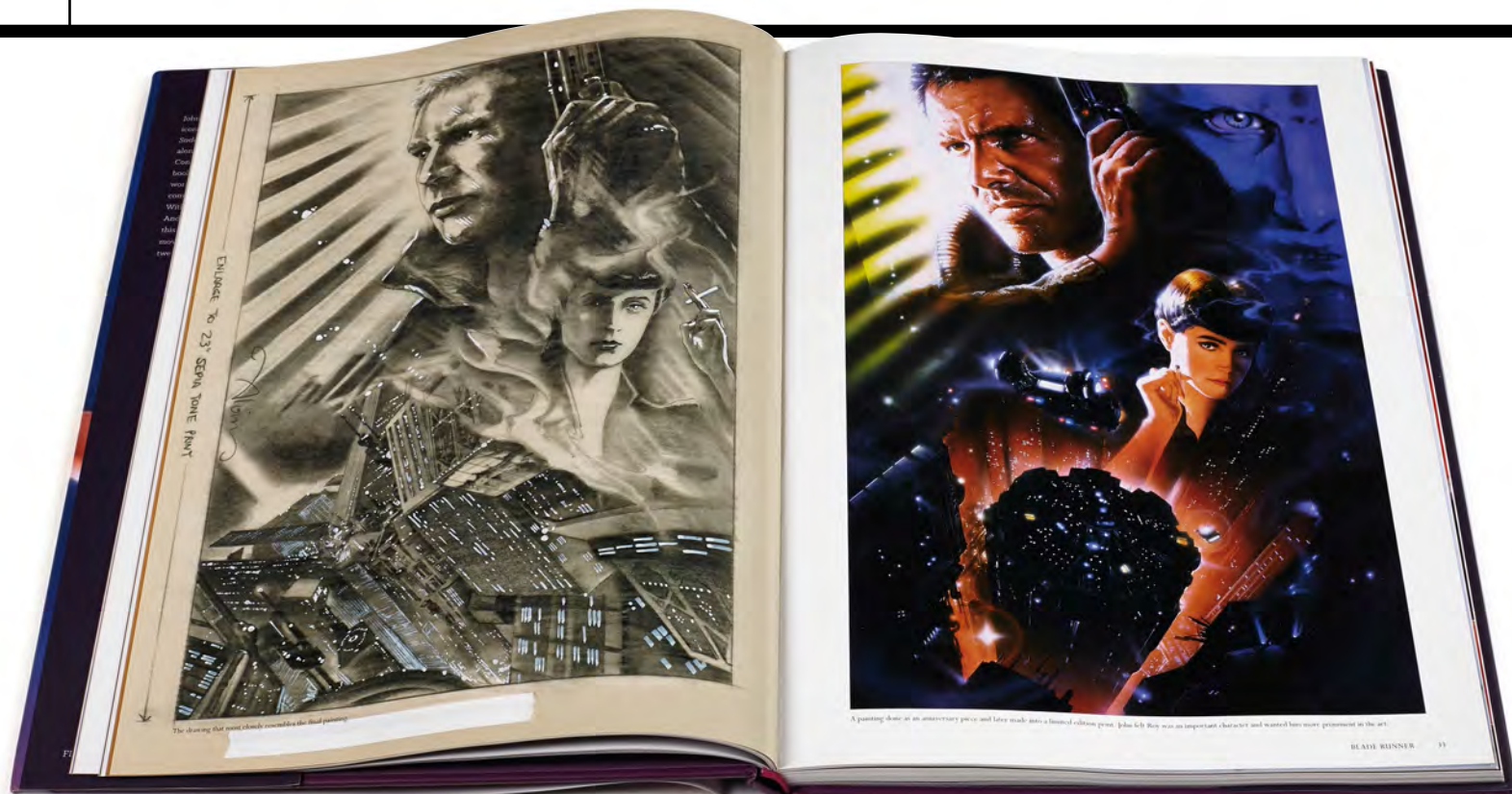- Lip-sync
- Polishing the animation

Length
151 minutes

Rating

The Art of John Alvin

POSTER BOY Film aficionados will lap up this tribute to an important poster artist from Hollywood's last golden age

Author Andrea Alvin **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £25 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Movie posters are an art form unto themselves. As well as selling and representing a film, they have to stand out among all the other posters in a cinema lobby. They straddle advertising, marketing and sheer creativity, and they're one of the hardest things to get right.

The Art of John Alvin is an in-depth look at one of the true masters of the form. It's written by his wife Andrea, and features rare examples of WIPs and rejected concepts, as well as beautiful reproductions of his most iconic film posters.

Alvin began his career in the 1970s with posters for Mel Brooks' Blazing Saddles and Young Frankenstein. However, it was his poster for E.T. that launched his career. It simply shows Eliot's finger connecting with the titular alien's. It's an abstract work that

As well as working on posters, John was sometimes asked to supply artwork for marketing purposes.

references Michelangelo's The Creation of Adam, but at the same time it concisely sums up the themes of the film (friendship and connections), while maintaining an air of mystery. Imagine seeing the poster while knowing nothing about the film itself, as audiences in the 1980s would have.

John's Blade Runner poster takes a different, more open approach, but one that reflects director Ridley Scott's decadent vision of 2019 Los Angeles. "John felt that the city was an important character," writes Andrea. As a result, Harrison Ford and Sean Young's faces are split with shots of skyscrapers and flying cars, while maintaining the film's moody lighting and dark atmosphere. But it's debatable how successful John was when he revisited his own work for the 25th anniversary release of Blade Runner, and added Rutger Hauer's moody visage to the already iconic mix.

As well as creating posters in traditional mediums, John worked with photographs in a way that pre-dated Photoshop. His poster for 1980s teen horror flick The Lost Boys arranged photographs of the lead actors, which John then meticulously painted over,

Here's John's striking poster art for 1995's home video release of Star Wars: Episode IV.

removing rough borders and adding wisps of hair and even sunglasses on the hero's face. The result does a fine job of selling the cult movie.

Unfortunately, John passed away in 2008, aged just 59. But he's left a legacy of art that's every bit as immortal as the films they represent. Just think of Aladdin, The Lion King or Batman Returns, and it's easy to remember what the posters for those movies looked like. This book serves as a tribute to the man whose job it was to introduce the public to some of the most popular films of our time.

RATING ✎✎✎✎✎

The Art of Jim Burns: Hyperluminal

HYPER ACTIVE Chrome surfaces, women wearing absurdly impractical spacesuits, hideous aliens – yes, it's 1980s book covers!

Author Jim Burns **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £25 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

During his 40-year career Jim Burns has created covers for science-fiction and fantasy luminaries Peter F Hamilton, George RR Martin and Anne McCaffrey. Hyperluminal features all of his work, and is divided into the styles and genres he's worked in rather than going for any kind of chronological order.

Jim's most amazing talent is his sheer prolificness. He'll paint personal works based on, say, Mad Max, and they'll look just as good as his jacket

Planet of Peril was a private commission that Jim was more than happy to accept!

covers. He's also moved with the times, going from lovingly crafted 1980s illustrations rendered in airbrush and acrylics to sophisticated Photoshop compositions in the 2000s. He's not afraid to try new mediums, too, and six George RR Martin pieces use real-wood veneers as a canvas, which gives them a strange authenticity.

It doesn't always work. Some of his work now feels quite dated, while his illustrations for S Andrew Swann and Nancy Cross' novels are just plain weird, if charming in a nostalgic way – and there's probably not a huge amount you can do with the oddities of 1980s and 1990s science fiction. But Jim is still a lot better than most, and overall this is a fascinating voyage into a distinctive period of sci-fi and fantasy art.

RATING ✏✏✏✏

Graphic L.A.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING Movie and game artist Robh Ruppel reveals the secrets of creating great cityscapes in this compact publication

Author Robh Ruppel **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £15 **Web** www.designstudiopress.com **Available** Now

Robh Ruppel is best known for his work on role-playing games such as Magic: The Gathering, art direction on the films Meet the Robinsons and Brother Bear, and the game Uncharted 2. But Graphic L.A. shows another side to the artist, one which moves away from high-fantasy worlds and into more gritty and meditative ones.

As its name suggests, Graphic L.A. shows Robh's interpretations of the Californian metropolis. It's simply laid-

This image of Robh's accompanies some sage advice: build up details while keeping perspective spot on.

out, with lots of sketches and finished visions punctuated by authoritative, insightful text. "Good design contrasts the area of visual rest with visual complexity," he tells us. Composition is the order of the day here, with Robh explaining how to use light and dark, and geometric patterns to guide the viewer's eye across a piece of art.

It's an interesting approach that serves as both a compendium of Robh's work and a tutorial of sorts, although it concentrates more on the abstract, thoughtful nature of art than choosing the right brush or medium. It never feels like Robh's saying there's a right or a wrong way of doing things; instead, it's just the way he does things. The book's small and you'll get through it quickly, but it's worth the asking price.

RATING ✏✏✏✏

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FANTASY
illustrator

This issue:

HOW TO DEPICT
FACES THAT TELL STORIES
Edward Howard on why precision is key for communicating with viewers **Page 106**
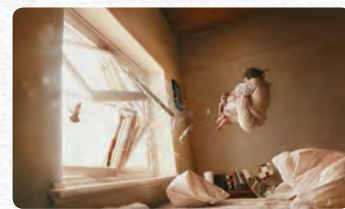
Jeremy Geddes
LOCATION: Australia
WEB: www.jeremygeddesart.com
EMAIL: jez@jeremygeddesart.com
MEDIA: Oils

Photorealistic painter Jeremy is best known for his series Cosmonauts. In his own words, he feels compelled to paint people floating or falling, his subjects often drifting through empty landscapes or colliding with the world around them.

Jeremy was born in Wellington, New Zealand. He moved to Australia to study at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, where he now lives with his wife and whippet.

The Kiwi began working full-time as a painter in 2003 and won the Spectrum Gold Award for his Doomed comic cover. His children's picture book, The Mystery of Eilean Mor, picked up a string of prizes, including the Crichton Award.

IMAGINEFX CRIT
"Taking the photorealistic approach can help the viewer to accept the fantastical elements of an image. But it takes skill to do it right – of which Jeremy has plenty. It's engaging art of the highest order."
Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

1 A PERFECT VACUUM
Oil on board, 20x35in
"The relationship between the bird, the figure and window was designed to be ambiguous. A Perfect Vacuum is also the title of a book of short stories and essays by Stanislaw Lem, which is one of the books in the painting."

🇺🇸 **Nathan Spoor**
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.nathanspoor.com
EMAIL: nathan@nathanspoor.com
MEDIA: Acrylics

"I create my works organically," Nathan says. "I allow the images to arrive at their own insistence: a process I call suggestivism. It's something I've been refining for almost 20 years."

The principles of suggestivism led to a series – which the American's been working of for over a decade – titled The Intimate Parade. Each painting "follows its own narrative" and takes between one and three years to complete. "I take my time," Nathan says. "I work very methodically and with the most patience, allowing the suggestions to arrive when they are ready, and the work to evolve at its own pace."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Sometimes it helps to have the artist explain their work to you. But with Nathan's work I find myself coming up with different narratives for his multi-levelled art. Is this a good thing? Discuss."
Gary Evans,
Staff Writer

1 BALLERINA, UNFURLED
Acrylic on panel, 16x10in
"This painting shows the female character in a state of transforming or setting her inner self free to become something new."

2 THE GREAT DIVIDE
Acrylic on canvas, 20x22in
"This is what I think the levels of consciousness could look like – either as an individual falls asleep or ponders some great issue."

3 THE ELEGANT CHARADE
Acrylic on canvas, 42x72in
"It took me over three years to create this painting. It features a selection of ideas gleaned from the past 10 years of thought and work from the series, and was created for the Masterworks exhibit at LBMA."

1

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com

HEY YOU! Are you a part of a regular art class or group? Email us at mail@imaginefx.com if you want to feature here!

BAND OF DOODLERS: SINGAPORE

MAS SHAFREEN tells us how interactive arts can make a real difference, and why white space is the enemy of his sketch gang

Band of Doodlers is a collective of Singaporean illustrators on a mission to rid the world of white space. Sprawling canvases, glass murals, walls, floors, ceilings… indoors or out, no surface is safe from the group and its spidery sketches.

It was just six short months ago when Mas Shafreen – better known as wanton doodle – founded the group. In that time its number has swelled from 10 initial members to today being over a hundred strong.

"When I started the group I never expected it to grow to this size in such a short space of time," Mas says. "However, BOD is inclusive by design. We welcome anyone who can hold a marker and is passionate about drawing."

Since its inception, the group has doodled live and to commission for Starbucks, the National Arts Council and at the Singapore Grand Prix.

"Our events are platforms for co-creation," Mas says. "I believe that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, which is why I encourage collaboration

Beginning with just 10, Band of Doodlers currently boasts some 100 artists and always welcomes newcomers.

among artists. We co-create pieces. As much as people love to interact, amazing stuff happens when we hit a mural as a group. Most importantly, we have fun."

While providing opportunities for its members to network and exchange ideas, the Doodlers as a group also acts as evangelist for interactive arts, promoting drawing as a social pastime through its live performances.

"We meet almost every week for doodling events and performances, or simply to bond and exchange ideas. But we also conduct workshops, visual recording exercises and team building activities to encourage camaraderie and self-discovery through doodling."

Mas says that there's no hierarchy within the group, with members taking turns to lead events. He simply helps his artists manage each project, with the ultimate aim of recruiting more Doodlers along the way.

"I'm hoping we expand and our membership continues to grow globally. It'll make our plans for world domination over blank spaces a heckuva lot easier!"

Visit www.wantondoodle.com to see more from Mas. For information on Band of Doodlers head to www.bandofdoodlers.com.

The Doodlers refer to themselves a "white space bandits." No surface is too big or blank for the gang – as this lengthy mural proves.

BAND ON THE RUN

No space is safe from Singapore's fearless Band of Doodlers!

The doodlers created this mural on the floor for Noise Singapore.
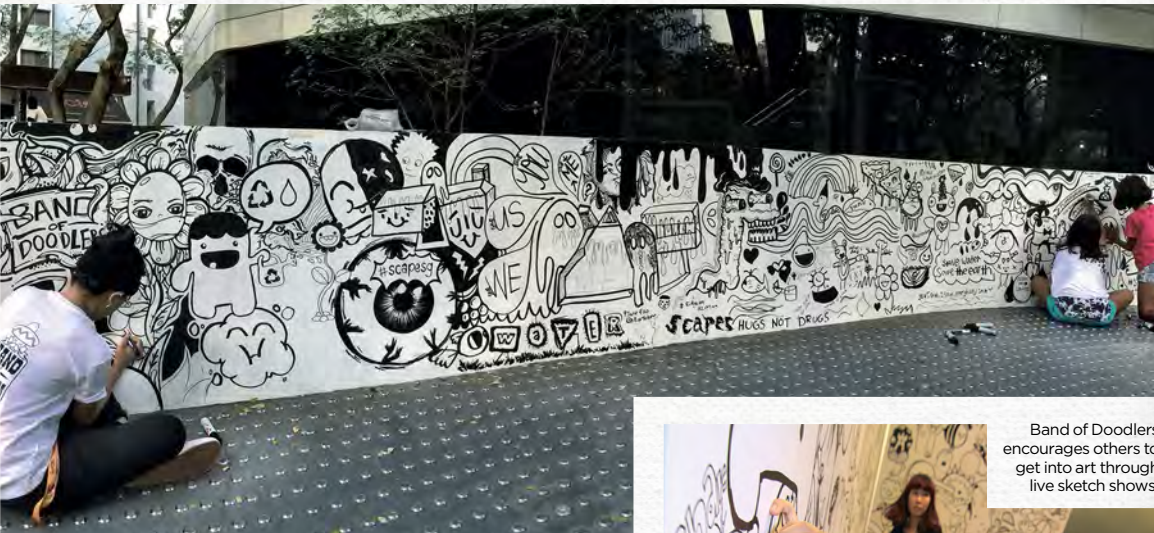
Band of Doodlers encourages others to get into art through live sketch shows.

A young doodler busy at creative get-together Makers' Block.

As well as accepting private commissions, the group promotes the art of doodling.

Intricate line-work drawn at Makers' Block – an event by makers, for makers.

The group's members take turns organising events and believe that the best art is achieved through collaboration.

More work for Noise Singapore, an organisation that promotes young creative talent.

GET YOUR
RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

ImagineFX
VIDEO
WORKSHOP

Oils

FOCUS ON THE FACE

EDWARD HOWARD demonstrates how he paints the human face and why precision is so important in communicating with the viewer

Our task as artists is daunting: we must communicate an entire story or moment in just one image. We must say so much with so little.

Eugéne Fromentin said that, "Art is the expression of the invisible by means of the visible." With that in mind, I believe that the depiction of the human face is the keystone in our communication of the invisible. Visually, we immediately seek out the human face for emotional cues when we engage an image. This is evident when I look at a piece such as Illya Repin's Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan (1885); it's hard to miss how a well-executed face has the ability and power to carry an entire narrative.

The face is an intricate construct of semi-symmetrical peaks and valleys, flesh and muscle, wrapped upon and within a bone lattice, all working in concert to communicate human expression and emotion. The face is a truly amazing feat of evolutionary

MATERIALS

PAINTS
■ Oil paints:
■ Old Holland
■ Winsor & Newton

MEDIUMS
■ Gamblin refined linseed oil
■ Gamblin Gamsol
■ Winsor & Newton Liquin
■ Grumbacher Cobalt drier
■ Clove oil

BOARD
■ Pre-treated gesso board

engineering, which is incredibly difficult to accurately produce.

We as artists must seamlessly merge each technical, topographic facial element until they become one harmonious emotional depiction to truly communicate with the viewer. If any element fails, if the proportions or the perspective are off just a little, then the viewer is lost.

In this workshop, I take a look at how my piece entitled Rescue of the Last Turtle King began and my initial stages of preparation. After discussing the piece as a whole, I focus on the faces. I go through, step-by-step, the process of building the faces up so that they tell a story.

For me, depicting the face is the most difficult and most rewarding. There's nothing like getting it right, and there's nothing worse than getting it wrong. It's about practice. It's about observation. It's about patience. Use reference, constantly measure, and don't be afraid to start again. Every failure is a success because of the knowledge you gain.
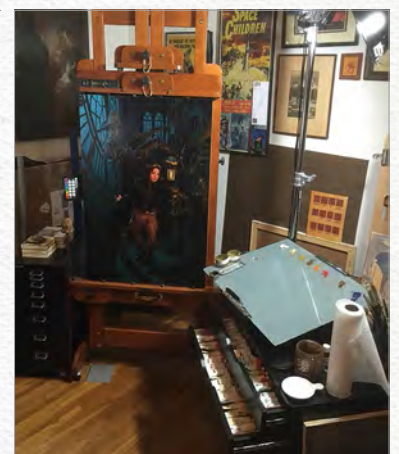
Edward is an artist based in Los Angeles. Since his debut in 2012, his work has been published in Spectrum 18-21. He has been selected to participate in the Main Show of IlluXCon 5, 6 and 7. His works can be found in collections across the country. To see more oil and digital works by Edward, visit www.efhoward.com.

1 *Visualise the idea in a sketch*
I always like to fill pages with small sketches – little ideas that pop into my head. Through sketching, I eventually stumble upon an idea that intrigues me, and I explore it further to see where I can take it.

2 *Experiment using thumbnails*
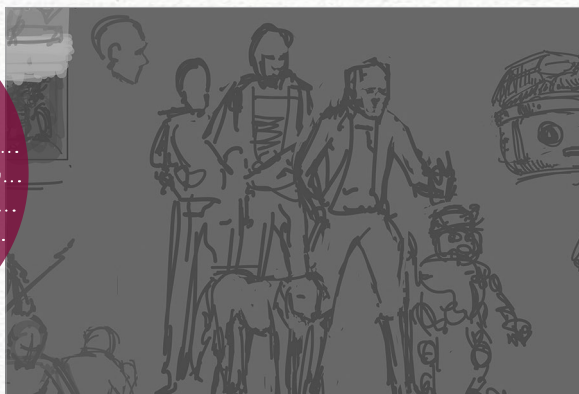I begin with a series of thumbnails. These aren't tightly rendered images, just little blobs. I'm looking at composition, experimenting with lights and darks, and focusing only on the big shapes.

ARTIST INSIGHT

BEGIN AGAIN
If, while painting, an element you're focusing on just isn't working, there's a tendency to continue repairing in the hope that you'll eventually stumble upon the answer. What usually happens is that the repairs just make things worse. The hardest lesson to learn is when to wipe and begin the element again with the lessons you've learned. It will always be better the second time.

3 *Putting together the composition*
I have my image and various elements selected. Now I need to place them in a way that's balanced and moves the viewer's eye. Using one of my photo reference shots I begin to sketch in different elements to see how they work as a whole. There's still plenty of time for changes, if I feel things aren't working..

4 *Lay down a grid*
I cover the board with a toned wash of pigment and turpentine. I want to kill the bright white of the board to better judge my values later on. I then transfer my image on to my board, using a traditional grid method and white chalk.
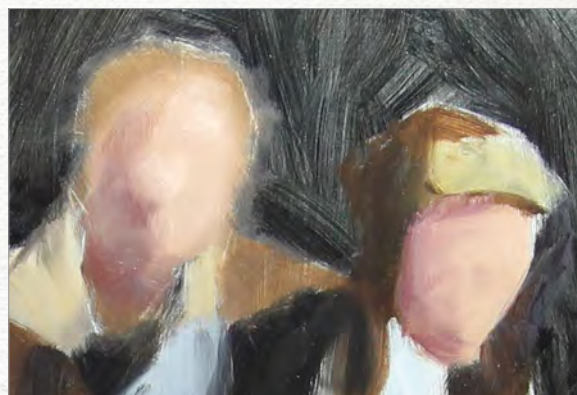
5 *Blocking-in*
I cover the board with large blocks of colour. The only goal is to approximate the general values of the piece as a whole. I want to see how lights and darks are balanced. I squint my eyes to make sure these areas are working.

6 *Break-down the shapes*

I begin to break the blocks into the larger shapes, pushing and pulling to determine values. I don't want to get bogged down in one area. I keep moving over the piece so that I don't get stuck working on one area. If you're bothered by something, move on and come back later after you've completed that specific pass. ➤

7 *Focus on the face*
After a few general passes, I begin my focus on the faces of the principle characters, breaking down the larger shapes even further. My image hinges on these faces, and their values and hues will essentially determine the quality of everything else.

8 *Correct proportions*
I'm still breaking down the larger shapes and constantly checking to make sure that my shapes are correctly placed by measuring the distances to key features. I'm also beginning to consider light and how it's playing across the face.
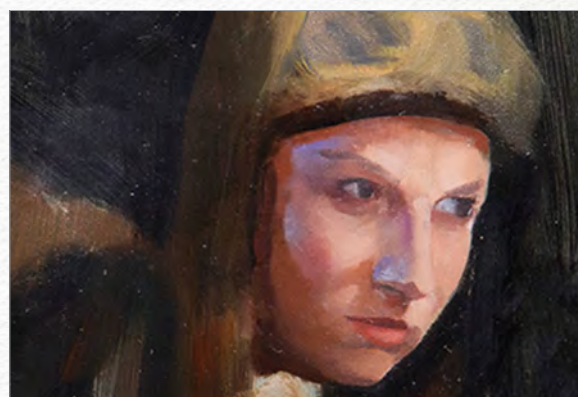
9 *Ensure the eyes are right*
I begin my eye placement. I have all the general shapes in place, and I'm satisfied with where they are, proportionally. My goal is to lock in the eye placement. I'm not worried about rendering the eyes. I just want to have them solidly placed in their sockets.
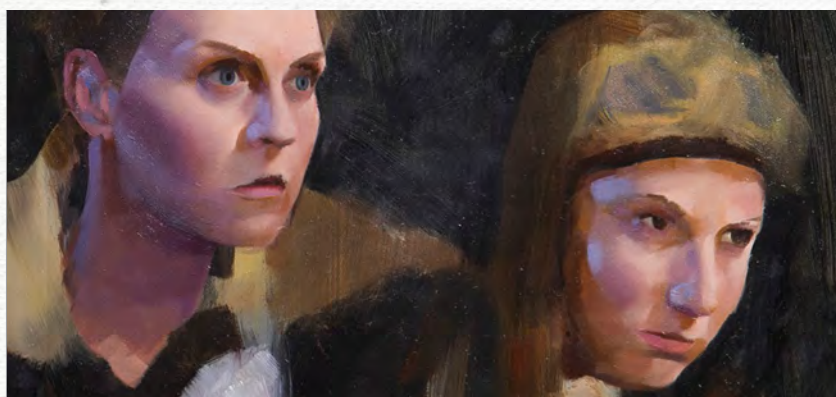
10 *Depict accurate-looking flesh*
I lay in very rich layers of flesh, constantly blending and shaping. I want the flesh to be soft and blended, without hard lines or rigidity; flesh has to undulate over the muscle and bone. If I overwork the area it becomes muddy, but if I underwork the area then it retains the sharpness from brush work. I have to find that perfect middle ground. If it doesn't work I'll wipe it off and start again.

11 *Check facial elements*
Working with the different features of the face, I begin making sure they are placed precisely and that they're sitting securely within the face, not just sitting on top of it. I'm always measuring and double-checking. I begin to focus on the quality of light hitting the face. I also tackle the nose, making sure the skin properly wraps around.

12 Maintaining line quality

I'm still working on the face as a whole, but I'm focusing on line quality and general refinement. I soften the lines of the nose to make sure that they blend, helping to better unify the image. I'm always checking values, making small adjustments here and there.

13 Hair and final pass

I mix all the values I need for the hair and begin to loosely put the colours down. I don't want them to blend – I just want the strokes to gently lay on top of each other. I let the brush bristles do the work for me. I don't press too hard on my brush; instead, I just let it skim across the surface. I begin my final pass of the face, inserting specular highlights and using glazes where I feel the value or hue needs to be adjusted.

14 Tackling the rest of the composition

Now that I have the faces in place, I'm happy to proceed with the introduction of other features of the scene. I progress element by element, making sure not to get too bogged down with one area. I continue the method of breaking down shapes into smaller forms.

TOOL TIP

CHECK YOUR VALUES
Use a mirror to check your values. A black mirror helps eliminate colour and enables you to focus on the lights and darks.

15 Finishing up

Now that I have everything in place I can step back and see what needs to be adjusted. Most of the adjustments are done with various glazes that help me push and pull value and colour.

ARTIST INSIGHT

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RESOURCES
As I've said before, there are amazing resources on the internet. Be sure and check out Google Art Project, Art Renewel Center and the National Trust Collections. These collections offer over a million images of works from museums and collections all over the globe. Take advantage of these incredibly valuable reference resources today!

Pencil   *Pen*   *Clay*   *Oils*

MAKING REFERENCE MAQUETTES

JAMES GURNEY recommends constructing a reference maquette to push your image to a higher level of realism, whatever medium you're working in

Whether it's an epic panorama or a rush job, I always build a reference maquette to help visualise imaginary vehicles, creatures or architecture. Why? Well, for me the answer's pretty obvious: the extra work saves me time in the long run by clearing away uncertainties.

A hand-made maquette yields surprising insights that my imagination would never have dreamed up, because my imagination, like everyone else's, is shackled by habit and convention. As the great French filmmaker, poet and novelist Jean Cocteau put it: "True realism consists in revealing the surprising things which habit keeps covered and prevents us from seeing."

The insights revealed by maquettes include overlapping, foreshortening, cast shadows, secondary light sources and nuances of organic textures used in its construction. Natural lighting effects are especially important, because convincing lighting is the key to realism. Without a maquette, I'm hesitant to commit to definite light and shadow, which in nature are vividly contrasted.

This article, the first in a series, presents a case study, showing how the maquette pushed the finish beyond the sketch.

One of James Gurney's favourite science fiction authors is Jules Verne, so he was thrilled to be awarded the Jules Verne prize in 2010 in Nantes, France.
www.gurneyjourney.blogspot.co.uk

MATERIALS
- Aluminium armature wire
- Polymer clay
- Sculpey or Fimo sculpting compound
- Aluminium foil (as void filler)
- Pencil, pen
- Heavy paper, illustration board
- Oils

1 Take the sketches as far as you can

I'm asked to do the poster for Utopiales, a fantasy, comics and sci-fi festival that takes place in Nantes, France, the birthplace of Jules Verne. I flash on the idea of a huge insect aircraft departing the town, set at the time of Verne. I work up three colour sketches in oil, working from my imagination.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

I play around with colour and function

Figures give the structure context for size

Physical maquette with opposable wings

ARTIST INSIGHT
GO FAST

I build a maquette as quickly as I can, and use found objects to save time sculpting. Epoxy putty, hot glue and Sugru hold dissimilar objects together.

2 Match the maquette to your sketch

To maintain the organic look of the fuselage, I sculpt the body of the craft out of polymer clay, an oven-hardening compound marketed under the name Sculpey or Fimo. I first make a skeletal armature twisted out of thin aluminium wire. I draw the butterfly wing pattern on heavyweight paper and cut out the wings. Then I epoxy the wings on to the wire struts and paint the fuselage with acrylic.

Warm light from above

Cool light from below

Photo taken with camera moving on curving track

3 Experiment with lighting

One of the benefits of maquettes is that you can explore lighting ideas that would otherwise be hard to invent. I try four lighting ideas. The last one is shot outdoors in overcast light with an incandescent light filling the shadows. The other three are shot indoors with two lights of contrasting colour temperature.

4 Try different angles and poses

As I lay out the line drawing, I hold the maquette in my hand and adjust the wings. Holding the object in my hands makes it feel real, and that transfers to the drawing. I keep returning to my original vision for the scene: a little over a 100 years ago, Nantes has strange visitors who arrive and depart by moonlight in this incredible flying machine. It flies very gently and majestically, like a sailing ship.

MATERIAL TIP

DOWN TO THE WIRE
If you're dealing with thin forms like insect legs, use floral wire for an armature, and flexible polymer clay.

Next month

Making creature maquettes

5 Push the final painting

The finished scene has two sources of light: moonlight from above and firelight from below. Notice the cast shadows on the wall, and how the light drops off on the outer part of the wing. I depict Jules Verne himself at the extreme lower left. The assignment takes 12 days in all, including two days building the maquette. After the poster is published, the Jules Verne museum of Nantes purchases the final picture for display in its permanent collection.

First Impressions

Petar Meseldžija

Country living and a certain comic artist inspired Petar in his creative choices

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I was born and raised in Serbia, which at that time was part of Yugoslavia. I spent a big part of my early childhood in a village with my grandparents. The countryside has made a huge impact on me, helping to form my artistic preferences.

What's the first art that you remember, and what effect did it have?
I was about five and sitting at the table in my grandparents' house, trying to draw Lucky Luke, a famous Belgian comic character created by Morris (Maurice De Bevere). Comics were my first love. They formed a bridge that brought me to the world of art.

What was your next step in art?
The first part of my art career was marked by drawing comics. I was very passionate about comics and spent much of my spare time drawing them, creating about 300 pages over 10 years.

Name one person who helped you on your way?
I can name two. First, my uncle, who introduced me to comics. The second is Duda Vukojev, my early mentor, fellow artist and friend, who inspired and encouraged me.

And someone who got in your way?
Mostly myself. High artistic aims in combination with my perfectionism have made my life unnecessarily complicated at times. One needs to

GOLDEN APPLE-TREE AND THE NINE PEAHEN
"Painted in 2012. One of the illustrations from the book Serbian Fairytales."

> ❝ Hard work and persistence, a healthy dose of self-esteem, doubt, courage and sacrifice ❞

KRAMPI
"Drawn in 1981 and 1982. My first published comic series."

acknowledge and accept one's limitations. That's one of the secrets to a happy and productive creative life.

What was your first paid commission?
My first comic series, Krampi, which was published in Stripoteka, one of the leading comic magazines in Serbia in the 1980s. I was 15 years old when my comic career began.

What's the last piece that you finished, and how do the two differ?
I recently finished an oil painting depicting a giant who's fighting a bunch of medieval warriors. It was created for my upcoming book, The Book of Giants, which will be published in the US next year by Flesk Publications. The difference between this painting and my first

published comic is huge. There's an obvious gap between them, caused by 30 years of work, struggle and development.

What is the most important thing that you've taught someone?
I don't think I'm a good teacher. I do hope, however, that some of the younger artists I worked with in the past were able to learn the importance of the following: hard work and persistence, a healthy dose of self-esteem, as well as doubt, courage and sacrifice.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
Be less afraid of being yourself.

How has the industry of fantasy art changed for good since you've been working in it?
The introduction of digital technology in the creative process has changed much of the character of fantasy art. It's offered many new opportunities and widened the spectrum of artistic expression. Likewise, it's changed the general perception of fantasy and given birth to a new sensibility.

What gripes do you have about the fantasy art industry right now?
Digital tools have made fantasy look more realistic, and made them glitter more than ever before, but often at the expense of content. The focus is more on the surface of things, and less on their essence. They've enabled uniformity to gain the upper hand in fantasy art, overloading the market with sameness and mannerism.

Why is it still the best place to work?
The recent expansion of fantasy art industry, made possible by the digital revolution, has created new opportunities for work and development. There's a significant amount of money involved in this business as well. But let us not forget that what's best for me might not be best for you. I know artists who aren't willing to give up their artistic freedom for all the money and fame that can be found nowadays in commercial arts and fantasy art in particular.
Petar's award-winning art has been published in books and shown in galleries all over the world. www.petarmeseldzijaart.com.

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† World Forest Resources, 1953 and UN FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2010

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2D ACADEMY

3D ACADEMY

WORKSHOPS

INTERVIEWS

JAMES VANDENBOGART
GOD OF WAR
ASCENSION

9015

TERM - 2

TERM - 1

Production
Modeling

Anatomy for
Production 1

Production
Modeling

Anatomy for
Production 1

TERM - 3

Character
Casting

Character
Creation 1

TERM - 4

Character
Creation 2 & 3

Demo - Reel
Production

3 D . C G M A S T E R A C A D E M Y . C O M